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OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

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ON HANSON'S SENSATIONAL START -
IN HIS OWN WORDS

TOMMY BOY!

MLB
All-Star Game
2009

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BATTING ORDER

AUGUST 2009

POWER HITTERS

6-9

"THE DUNGEON"

Chipper's Playroom Contains Grand Memorabilia Collection
And Provides Relief From Baseball's Grind | By Patty Rasmussen

18-19

PLAYING PEPPER

Yunel Escobar Answers Our Questions About His Aggressive
Style Of Baseball | Interview By Patty Rasmussen

20-22

FOUR-PEAT

Another Mid-Summer Classic
Has McCann's Legend Blossoming | By Jon Cooper

24-25

TOMMY BOY!

The Lowdown On Hanson's Sensational Start -
In His Own Words | By Tommy Hanson

26-28

THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

There's No Easy Way About It - Hitting A Round Ball Squarely
Is One Tough Assignment | By Ray Glier

29-31

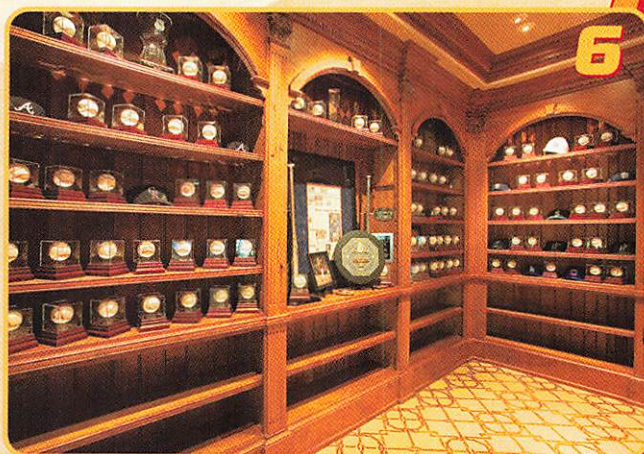
STEEE-RIKE 3!

Javier Vazquez Is Striking Back At His Reputation
By Whiffing Hitters With A Vengeance | By Jon Cooper

41

NEW YORK MINUTE

In A Flash, Trade To Mets Jolts Francoeur's
Once-Promising Career | By Mark Bowman of MLB.com



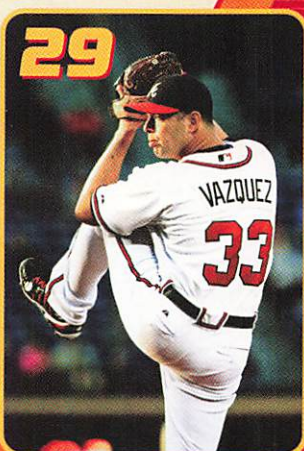
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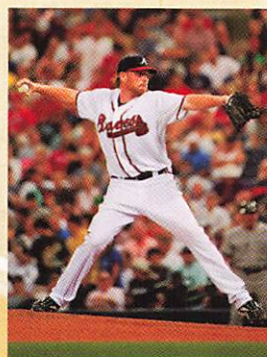
ATLANTA BRAVES



ATLANTA BRAVES



DONALD RUSINGER/GETTY IMAGES



COVER CREDITS

TOMMY HANSON
Courtesy of the Atlanta Braves

Chipper Jones:
Allison Shirreffs

Design by Clark Odom

BATTING ORDER

AUGUST 2009

SINGLES HITTERS

- 12-13 SCOREBOARD
- 14-15 BUNTS & BASEHITS
- 16-17 OFF THE FIELD
- 32-33 BIG SHOT POSTER
The Intimidator | **Rafael Soriano**
- 37 BEHIND THE NUMBERS | By Steve Fall
- 54-55 HEROES & HISTORY
At 76, **Dave Bristol's** Working With Son's High School Team And Three Colleges
By Brian Knapp
- 56 ALUMNI NOTES
- 58-59 BEYOND BASEBALL | By Patty Rasmussen
- 60-61 TALKIN' CHOP
- 62 XTRA INNINGS
Kim & Tim Hudson Launch Their New Foundation | By Patty Rasmussen

PITCHERS

- 11 PAINTING THE CORNERS | By Jay Busbee
- 15 FRANK WREN
- 17 BOBBY COX
- 28 AROUND BASEBALL | By Ken Rosenthal
- 51 INDIVIDUAL STATS
- 57 GARY CARUSO
- 61 JOHNNY SAJEM'S CARTOON

PINCH- HITTERS

- 48-49 TICKET/TURNER FIELD INFO
- 50 2009 SCHEDULE CALENDAR
- 52-53 GAME BY GAME
- 55 SCIENCE OF BASEBALL | By Steve Fall
- 56 BIRTHDAYS
- 62 FAN CLUBS GUIDE

ON DECK

- 42-47 FARM SYSTEM ROUNDUP | By Bill Ballew
- 44 TOP PROSPECTS
- 45 DOWN ON THE FARM | By Cody Johnson
- 46-47 FARM TEAM INDIVIDUAL STATS

14



JOHN GREENBERG/ALB PHOTOS



SPECIAL

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 8

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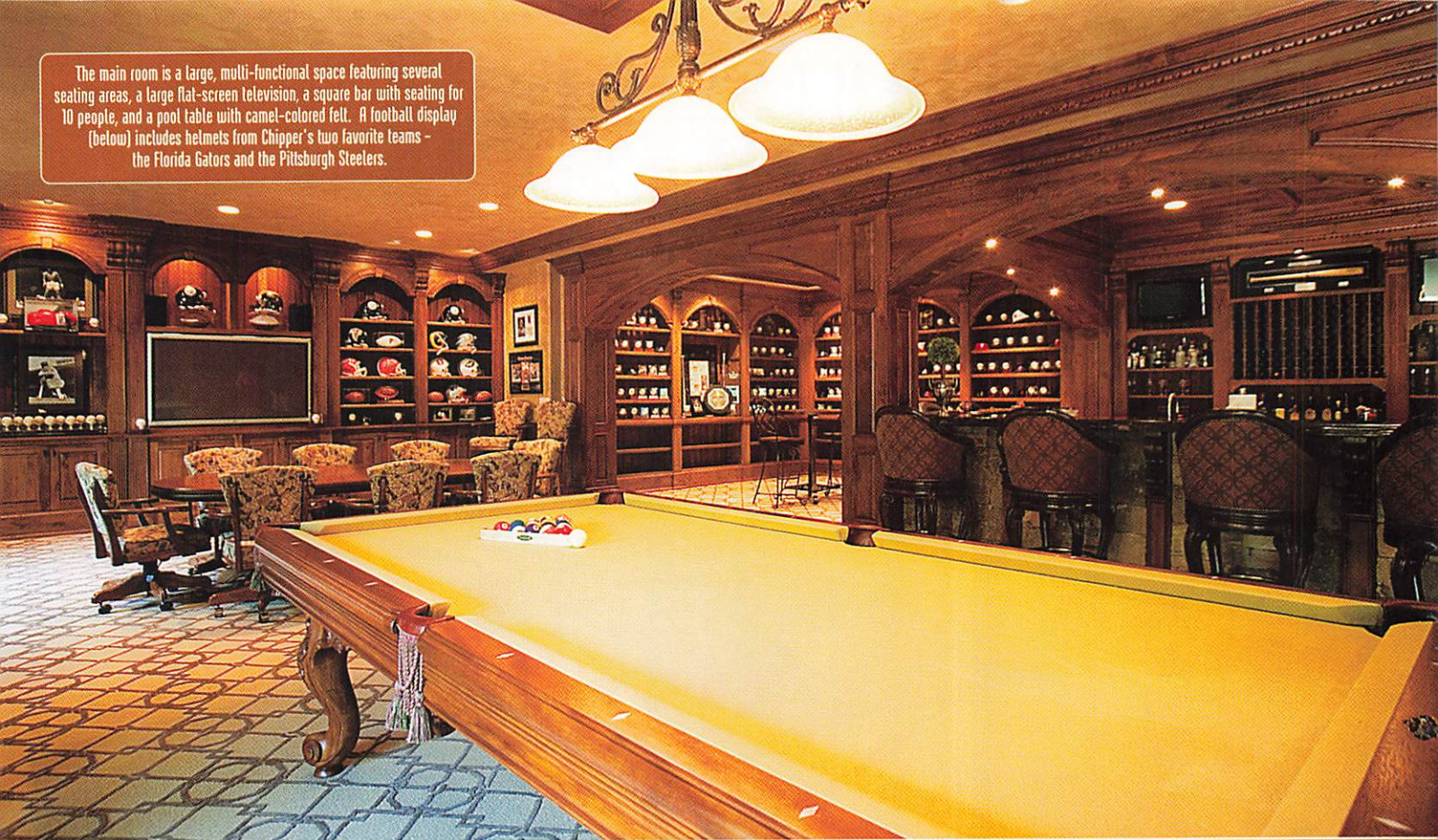
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The main room is a large, multi-functional space featuring several seating areas, a large flat-screen television, a square bar with seating for 10 people, and a pool table with camel-colored felt. A football display (below) includes helmets from Chipper's two favorite teams - the Florida Gators and the Pittsburgh Steelers.



"The Dungeon"

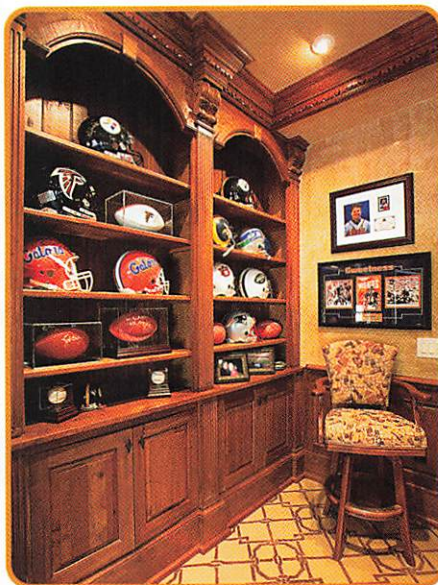
**Chipper's Playroom Contains Grand Memorabilia Collection
And Provides Relief From Baseball's Grind**

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN
PHOTOS BY ALISON SHIRREFFS

AFTER A LONG DAY and night at Turner Field, Chipper Jones knows there is 8,000 square feet of pure relaxation waiting for him at his home in Roswell, a north-Atlanta suburb.

"When I come home, my wife, Sharon, is usually getting ready for bed, and the boys are long gone," said Jones. "Rather than toss and turn, I head down to my dungeon. It's dark and quiet, and I don't even get cell (phone) reception!"

When the Joneses bought their house, a builder's spec home, in July 2005, the basement space, the footprint of the house, remained unfinished until the decorating was done upstairs. They knew they wanted to create a space for entertaining, relaxing, and displaying Jones' vast collection of sports memorabilia, but it wasn't the top priority. The first thing to go in downstairs



was a gym for Chipper's daily off-season workouts and a playroom for their children, Trey (9), Shea (4), and Tristan (3). Eldest son, Matthew (11), lives in Michigan with his mom, and makes frequent visits throughout the year. But over the past few off-seasons, Jones slowly worked on getting the basement finished to his specifications.

The result is a beautifully decorated, state-of-the-art "dungeon" that has everything Jones needs to chill out after a game - a gorgeous bar, home theater, television and pool table. The walls are a warm tan faux-finish with lots of beautiful wood accents, beams, chair rails, and crown molding. The home theater, complete with a ticket booth, is accented with a whimsical carpet woven with colorful, oversized M&M candies, reels of film, and tickets reading "Jones' Theater."

The main room is a large, multi-functional

space featuring several seating areas, including a secluded parlor off to the side with a large flat-screen television, and windows and French doors looking onto a terrace garden leading to the backyard pool deck. A square bar with seating for 10 people serves as a centerpiece to the room, along with a new pool table with camel-colored felt.

"I had so much stuff (memorabilia). Probably 80 percent of it was in storage for the past five or six years," said Chipper.

Not any more.

To one side of the bar is a space where Jones displays his baseball collection, some signed by other players or celebrities, including supermodel Christie Brinkley who once photographed him for a magazine. But many of the baseballs are keepsakes of his milestones. Each ball rests in a Lucite box on a cherry wood stand. They're lined up in neat rows on built-in shelves lining the walls. Two rows of shelves at the bottom remain empty.

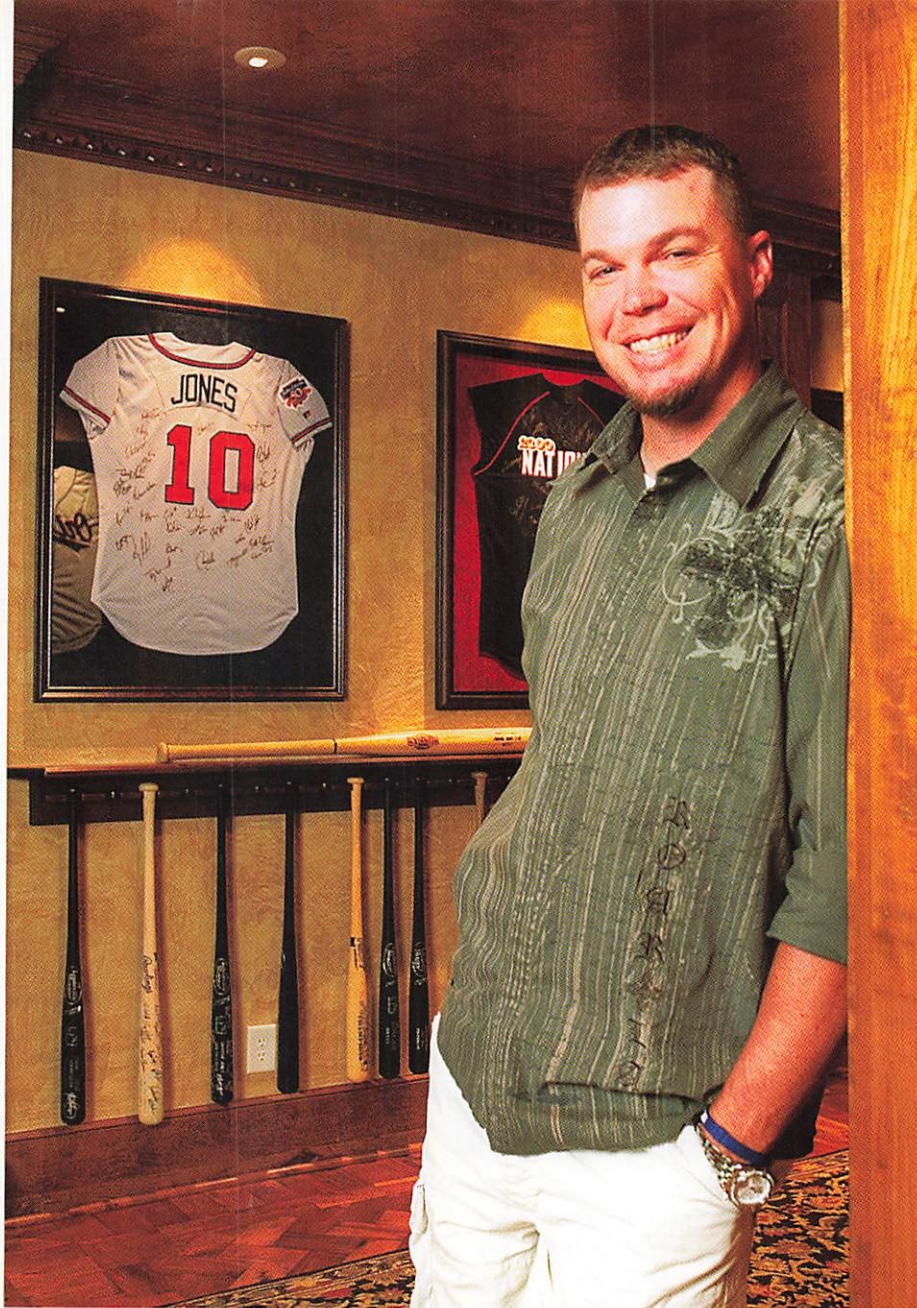
"I think, by the time all is said and done with my career, those two shelves will be filled up, too," Jones said.

Recessed ceiling lights set off the amazing display.

Also on the "ball wall" is a display of what could be described as the culmination of Jones' career.

"Every crowing moment, save the replica World Series trophy, is in there," he said.

It's an impressive collection - two Silver Slugger Awards (1999, 2000), the 1999 National League MVP award, a framed newspaper page from the MVP announcement, and his 1,000th and 2,000th career hit baseballs. His replica 1995 World Series



Chipper stands before some of the bats and jerseys in his impressive display. In another area of his retreat is the home theater (L) that features a carpet accented with images of film and M&M's.

trophy is on the top shelf of another row of baseballs.

In addition to his autographed baseball collection, Jones also has a fantastic assortment of bats, both his own and those autographed by other players. He pulls one off the bat rack lining the main hall. The bat is signed by Reggie Jackson, Enos Slaughter, Willie Mays, Joe DiMaggio, and a host of other Hall of Famers.

"I got it at a card show when I used to do card shows for money to get by," said Jones. "One of the vendors showed it to me, but I knew I couldn't afford it. He said he'd give it to me for autographs... he gave it to me for nothing! It's probably the most valu-



The highlight of the display of bats, balls and other memorabilia is the area in the center of the "ball wall" that holds Chipper's MVP Award, two Silver Slugger Awards, the balls from his 1,000th and 2,000th hits, and other special pieces.

able bat in the collection."

But it's not the bat with the most sentimental value. That title belongs to the bat that he used to hit his first major league home run, May 9, 1995, off the Mets' Josias Manzanillo in New York. Is it any wonder Chipper named one of his sons "Shea"?

Framed jerseys hang along the hallway above the bat rack. Among them is Chipper's 1995 World Series jersey, assorted All-Star Game jerseys and, because he liked the logo, he included the practice jersey from the 2008 All-Star Game played at old Yankee Stadium. There are even two World Baseball Classic jerseys hanging in the hall.

An avid sports fan, Jones collects other sports memorabilia, as well, including autographed jerseys from NFL quarterbacks Joe Montana (San Francisco 49ers), Brett Favre (Green Bay Packers), Dan Marino (Miami Dolphins), Peyton Manning (Indianapolis Colts), Tom Brady (New England Patriots) and Joe Namath (New York Jets). He also displays jerseys from Franco Harris, Hines Ward and Troy Polamalu, all players with his favorite pro



football team - the Pittsburgh Steelers. His collection also includes two University of Florida football helmets, his favorite college team, each signed by head coach Urban Meyer, who was a Braves minor leaguer before he decided to coach football.

In a large display case in the "quarterback room," Chipper has signed guitars from recording artists Kenny Chesney and Gary LeVox, lead singer of the country group Rascal Flatts. Another case holds a beautiful samurai sword on a display rack with a plaque reading: "2008 MLB Batting Champion, Mizuno USA."

Jones has been under contract to Mizuno, the Japanese-owned sporting goods company, since 2001, and the association has been mutually satisfying. The

company appreciated Jones so much that they gave him his agreed upon financial incentive after the 2007 season when they believed he should have received the Gold Glove Award but didn't.

"Mizuno has been a great company to back," he said. "They always come up with great awards. The sword meant a lot to me. When they give you something, it's always a very big deal."

No Chipper Jones collection would be complete without a tip of the cap to switch-hitting Hall of Famer Mickey Mantle, his father Larry's favorite player and one of his, too. Chipper has a large photo of "The Mick" framed and autographed.

"I met him the first time at a card show in 1992," recalled Chipper. "You talk about

Before heading out to lunch, Chipper and his wife, Sharon, pose in the backyard with sons (L-R) Trey, Tristan and Shea.

star struck!"

And one of the most sentimental pieces in his collection is a plaque featuring the 1990 All USA Today Team of the nation's best high school players, which included a very young Chipper, the first overall pick of that year's amateur draft, and fellow stand-outs, catcher Mike Lieberthal, the third pick who enjoyed a long career with the Philadelphia Phillies before his retirement in 2007, and pitcher Todd Van Poppel, the 14th pick of that draft class.

In addition to the sports memorabilia, family photos line the walls and are displayed on shelves. Chipper proudly points to a picture of his father, Larry, and son, Matthew, at his Double Dime Ranch in Texas, posing with the youngster's first deer.

"Look at him trying not to smile," Chipper said with a laugh.

It's easy to see the "dungeon" space is one of his favorite places in the house.

"We spend a lot of time down here," said Chipper. "Sharon and I play pool, the kids play here. We had a big Christmas party here in December, and even had a fire outside."

The Joneses have a large swimming pool in back that gets a lot of use during the hot Georgia summers. And though there are grassy play areas on either side of the pool, the family usually plays Wiffle ball in the courtyard off the kitchen.

"We set up home plate over by the garage and put out some bases," said Jones. "Anything hit on the roof or over the windows is a home run."

That provided the perfect cue for Shea to chime in, "I can smack the ball really hard.



I can hit it up to the roof. Tristan can't do that yet, but he will when he's bigger."

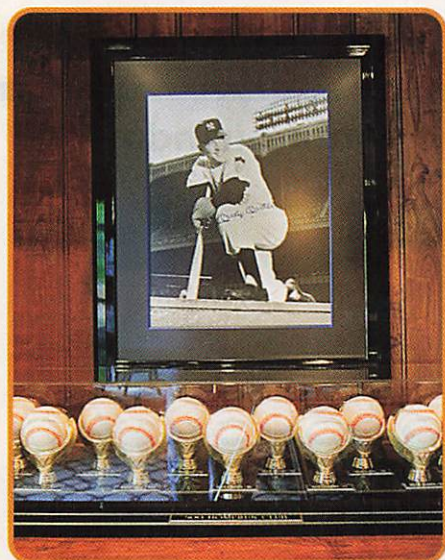
Shouts are heard coming from the playroom as Chipper heads back to check on his sons who have been playing patiently, though loudly, in the playroom. When he walks in, Shea is sitting on the roof of the playhouse, Trey is bopping things with an inflatable microphone, and Tristan is in the corner trying to push a large Pilates ball out in the middle of the room where he can play with it. The boys greet their dad by all talking at once. They're ready for some Daddy Time, and on this day, Chipper is taking the boys out to lunch before he heads to Turner Field.

Jones reflected on how much he appreciates having his family and home in Atlanta.

"I think people would be surprised to know how much I love being at home with my wife and my kids," said Jones. "We get paid and paid handsomely to play baseball, but it is a grind and it can get old, just like anything. You live for those games that are the chess match between pitchers and hitters, but it's not always positive. Sometimes

when I come home, I'll watch the DVD of all my good at-bats. I really believe in the power of positive reinforcement. But sometimes, like when you're in the middle of a 10-for-60 slump, you need to escape. This game can drive you mad if you don't hold it at arm's length from time to time. That's when I come down here and just watch television or a movie or play video games."

And don't forget: No cell phone reception!



An autographed photo of the late Mickey Mantle (L), Chipper's dad's favorite player, guards a collection of balls, and football jerseys and a guitar perk up a corner of the "quarterback room."



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- 3** Register your birthday or your child's birthday
- 4** Print the confirmation email
- 5** Bring it with you to the game

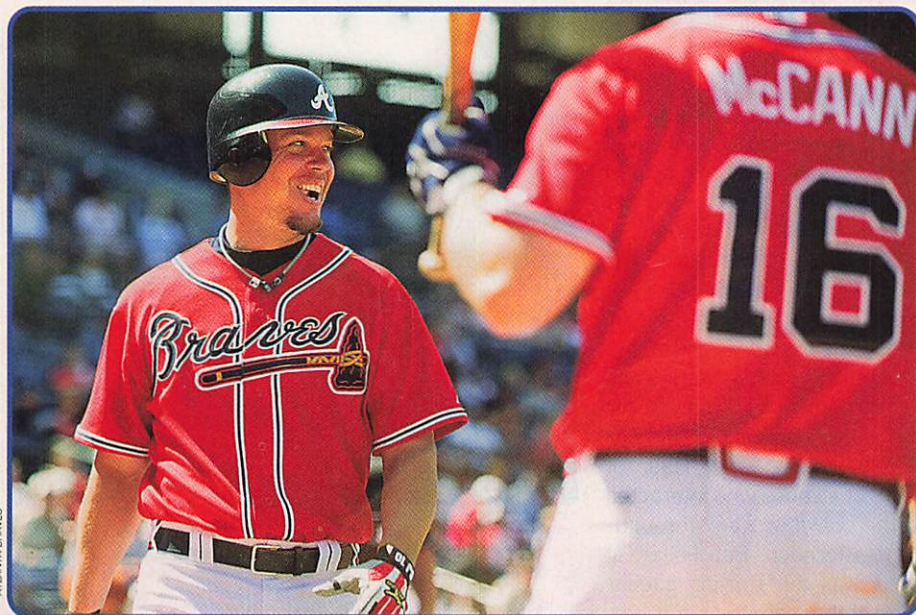


PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE



THE TELLTALE SIGNS OF A RECOVERY



More grinning by Chipper would be a sure sign that the Braves' fortunes are on the upswing.

I WAKE UP EVERY DAY and jump on the web or leaf through the paper, searching for hopeful signs. I'm looking for a recovery from this misery that's brought frustration and sadness to so many... looking for any signs of hope that the dark times will be over soon.

Oh, I'm not talking about the economy. That's a flat-out mess. No, I'm talking about the Atlanta Braves' too-long absence from the post-season. Alas, there's no bailout on the way. I don't think any congressmen outside of Georgia would consider marquee free agents a stimulus worthy of government dollars.

Still, I do see some signs of hope right now, and some more in the not-too-distant future. So, if you're looking for good news of your own, here are a few elements to keep an eye on to see if the Braves can craft a second act to follow their glory days of yore:

THE BRAVES BEAT THE TEAMS THEY SHOULD BEAT. As I write this, the Braves are coming off a triumphant sweep of the first-place Phillies. But they followed that by losing two of three to the Nationals, who are allegedly a major league team, but I don't really believe it. The Braves of the 1990s used to put up double-digit game leads on the competition by walloping the small fry. When Atlanta can go into Washington or Pittsburgh and leave both

players and fans weeping, that's a good sign indeed.

CHIPPER SMILES. Even when he was a rookie, Chipper Jones always had the demeanor of an older, crustier vet. He hasn't had a whole lot to smile about in the last three autumns, but when you see him cracking more and more grins in post-game interviews, you'll know good news is at hand.

A .500 RECORD STOPS BEING A GOAL AND STARTS BECOMING A MEMORY. Yes, this one's a bit obvious – win games, and the Braves will be successful. But for the last few years, Atlanta has been locked in a constant battle to stay above .500 – a few games above here, a few games below there. In the three-plus seasons since the Braves last made the playoffs, Atlanta has finished above .500 in only 8 of 21 full months. Ouch.

THE BRAVES DEVELOP SLUMP BUSTERS. Time was when Atlanta could halt almost any losing streak or cold-hitting stretch simply because the incomparable rotations and vaunted lineups almost never went south all at once. Even if two pitchers or a couple of hitters fell short, there was always another there to pick up the pieces and get the ship righted. Which actually brings up another point...

THE PITCHING STAFF STOPS GETTING COMPARED TO THE '90S ICONS. You've gotta feel for guys like Kenshin Kawakami and

Javier Vazquez. Shoot, they weren't within a thousand miles of Turner Field when Messrs. Maddux, Smoltz and Glavine ruled the majors. And yet Kawakami, Vazquez and all their teammates have to play in their shadow. But when these guys put up strong numbers without automatically being billed as, "the best since ...", then you'll know we're in the next era of success.

SOMEBODY'S GOT TO GET ON SPORTSCENTER. Okay, shooting for ESPN isn't the wisest of long-term goals. But what Atlanta needs is a reliable national presence, the way you could count on seeing at least one Andruw Jones gravity-defying grab back in the day. Maybe it's something amazing like Yunel Escobar turning an unassisted triple play or Nate McLouth hitting four homers in a game. Maybe it's just constant, routine greatness from Tommy Hanson or Brian McCann. Whatever. The more you see the Braves horning into the Yankees/Red Sox/Cubs domination of the national media, the more the team's fortunes are looking up.

NEW UNIFORMS. All black! All throw-back! Neon blue! All right, I'm kidding with this one. (All black, however, could be kind of cool – if a bit hot.)

A NEW FAN-FAVORITE RALLYING CRY ARISES. We don't want to see the Chop go – it gave this wonderful magazine its name, after all – but perhaps it's time to get something new to accompany it. Rally towels? Rally monkey? Thunder sticks? They're all pretty goofy until they're your own. And if Atlanta's fans can bond over a new silly catchphrase or activity, so much the better.

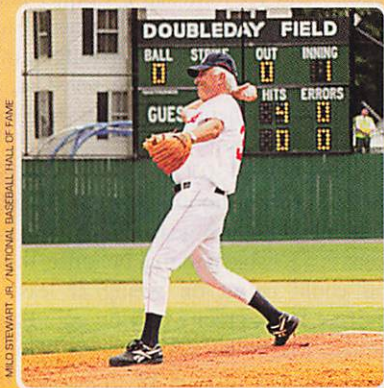
WE START HEARING GRIPES ABOUT ATTENDANCE AGAIN. I always had a problem with the constant playoff carping about attendance at early-round games. (Somehow, I don't anticipate similar problems when the Braves return to the post-season the next time around.) Still, to see Atlanta playing again when the weather turns cold, I'd gladly put up with "What's wrong with Atlanta's fans?" whines for weeks on end.

And, who knows? Line up enough of the above signs, and we just might get our wish. Bounceback, baby!

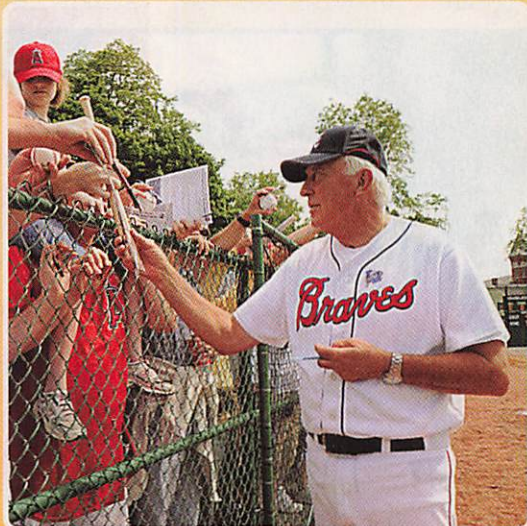
KNUCKLING DOWN

YOU CAN'T KEEP a good pitcher down. Phil Niekro knuckled his way through big league hitters until he was 48 years old en route to a spot in the National Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, N.Y. Niekro was back in Cooperstown - and pitching, nonetheless - on Father's Day, June 21 in the inaugural Hall of Fame Classic at Doubleday Field.

"Knucksie" faced five batters in one inning of "work," allowing two hits. The game was strictly a "for fun" exhibition among former major leaguers and Hall of Famers of all ages who interacted with the crowd of 7,069 throughout the afternoon. Bob Feller, at age 90, was the starting pitcher for one of the teams.



MILF STEWART JR./NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



Phil Niekro was among the Hall of Famers and other former major leaguers who participated in the inaugural Hall of Fame Classic and mingled with fans June 21 at Cooperstown, N.Y.

RAISE A GLASS

FROM THE STATE that gave baseball the Warren Spahn Award now comes a beer in honor of the great Braves lefthander who won more games (363) than any other southpaw in history. Recently released "Spahn 363" beer is available year-round in Oklahoma, where Spahn spent most of his life, as well as in Milwaukee and Arkansas.

Joe Prichard, owner of Choc Beer Company, co-owns Spahn 363 LLC with Greg Spahn, Warren's son.

Spahn 363 is the first kolsch-style beer brewed by Choc Beer Company in Krebs, Okla. Brewmaster Michael Lalli, according to the brewery, "has combined Wisconsin malt, imported German hops, proprietary German yeast and bottled conditioning to achieve a smooth, crisp ale that is wonderfully refreshing and serves as a great companion to German cui-



ATLANTA BRAVES

sine, earthy cheeses and smoked and grilled meats."

Spahn, who died in November 2003, three months after attending the dedication of the statue in his likeness at Turner Field, likely would have approved, since he was known to have a fondness for suds. The Warren Spahn Award is presented annually to the best lefthander in the majors.



The makers of Spahn 363 beer hope to make it available in Atlanta sometime in the near future.

Memories

COLLECTORS LIKE MILWAUKEE ERA

OVER 50 YEARS have passed since the 1957 Milwaukee Braves won the World Series, but their collectibles continue to spark great interest. Along with hundreds of other items, some of that team's memorabilia went up for bid at a live auction during the Major League Baseball All-Star FanFest in St. Louis the week of July 10-14.

Frank Torre, brother of Joe Torre and a smooth-fielding first baseman for the Braves from 1956 through 1960, never won a Gold Glove. However, after he served as president of Rawlings Sporting Goods, the company presented him with an honorary Gold Glove Award on his 50th birthday in 1981. The auction made that rare piece available with a price guideline of \$1,000-\$1,500.

"They certainly didn't do a lot of them," said David Hunt of Hunt Auctions, referring to the Torre piece. "I'm sure they did it for people who were with them for a long period of time or who were executives like Frank. It would be different if they gave it to their front office executive who never played baseball. That would still be interesting, but the fact that this one was given right to Frank is pretty unique."

The auction also featured a replica of

Braves manager Fred Haney's 1957 World Series ring. Hunt said it wasn't uncommon to have duplicates made like this. That appeals to collectors, since they can purchase them for much less than originals that could sell for \$20,000. This ring had a price range of \$2,000-\$3,000.

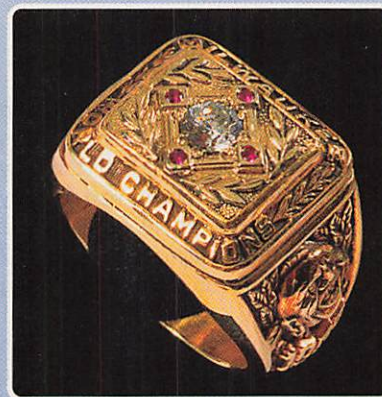
The most treasured Milwaukee Braves collectible up for bidding was a 1954 Warren Spahn road jersey. The classic game worn gray flannel uniform had a price guideline of \$20,000-\$30,000. It came from the collection of a Braves batboy whose mother worked as the club's switchboard operator. Hunt said Spahn memorabilia is highly sought after.

"He's one of those guys that was really well beloved, even though he played for a team that wasn't in a major market," said Hunt. "He's just one of those guys that people seem to gravitate toward in collectibles."

— STEVE FALL



A Warren Spahn jersey (center) was one of the main attractions at a live auction during All-Star FanFest in St. Louis, where a replica of Fred Haney's 1957 World Series ring and Frank Torre's honorary Gold Glove also were up for bid.



FAVORITES

	Movie	Music	Pizza Topping	Dessert	Player	Batman/Spiderman
 Peter Moylan	Shawshank Redemption	Sevendust	Any meat!	Ice cream	John Smoltz	Batman
 Jair Jurrjens	Major League	Lil Wayne	Pepperoni	Chocolate cake	David Justice	Batman
 Kenshin Kawakami	Saving Private Ryan	Pop	BBQ chicken	Soft ice cream	Randy Johnson	Spiderman
 Tommy Hanson	Boondock Saints	Rock	Pepperoni	Ice cream	Randy Johnson	Batman

HOT, AS IN... PRADO!

THE BRAVES re-established themselves against the division leader and defending World Champion Phillies June 30-July 2, and **Martin Prado** was a major reason for that. The Braves swept three games from the Phillies at Turner Field - the first home sweep of Philadelphia in four years and a big turnaround from last season when the Phils were 9-0 in Atlanta.

In the series opener, Prado had career-highs of four hits and four RBIs, including a game-tying double and a game-winning single in the Braves' 5-4 victory in 10 innings. Jair Jurrjens pitched 6 2/3 innings of no-hit ball in the second game, an 11-1 win, and Matt Diaz had three hits to lead a 5-2 victory in the series finale.

In the week ending July 5, Prado led the National League with 15 hits and a 1.000 slugging percentage to earn recognition as the NL Player of the Week. Prado paced the league with eight doubles and 26 total bases, tied for first in the NL with eight runs scored, and ranked second with a .577 batting average and a .621 on-base percentage. He had two four-hit games (June 30 and July 5). He hit safely in all six games played and finished with four multi-hit games and two multi-RBI efforts. On July 3 at Washington, he scored three runs to tie his career high.

It was Prado's first career weekly NL award. He will receive an engraved luxury Swiss watch from Tourneau.



Martin Prado finally got a chance to play regularly when Kelly Johnson went on the disabled list, and he responded by winning NL Player of the Week honors for the period ending July 5.

HUDSON'S REBOUND

Tim Hudson continues to get close to returning to the Braves' roster. He was scheduled to make his first rehab start July 19 for Myrtle Beach. Hudson had Tommy John (elbow reconstruction) surgery last Aug. 8. Recovery typically takes roughly 12 months, so he's right on schedule for being major league ready.

On July 2, Hudson threw a 90-pitch bullpen session in front of **Bobby Cox**, who later commented that Hudson is "ready" and had "major league stuff." Four days later, July 6, Hudson faced live hitters in a batting practice session at Wrigley Field.

Exactly how Hudson will be utilized upon his return remains to be seen since the Braves already have an effective five-man rotation.

ON THE MOVE

The Braves parted ways with **Jeff Francoeur**, 25, when they sent the struggling rightfielder to the Mets July 10 in exchange for outfielder **Ryan Church**, 30. **Bobby Cox** immediately began to use Church in right field. Francoeur, of course, burst on the scene straight out of Double A in 2005 and batted .300 in 70 games. He played all 162 games in both 2006 and '07

and drove in 103 runs in his first full season and 105 the next. Since then, he's never been the same, and was even demoted to Double-A Mississippi for three games last year at mid-season. For more on this transaction, see the story on page 41.

In other transactions, **Kelly Johnson**, also struggling with a .214 average, was placed on the disabled list July 3 with tendinitis in his right wrist. He was assigned to Triple-A Gwinnett July 7 for rehabilitation. To take his spot on the roster, the Braves purchased infielder **Brooks Conrad**, who they signed as a minor league free agent in the off-season, from Gwinnett.

In a move simply to add bullpen depth for the four-game series in Colorado right before the All-Star break, **Tommy Hanson** was optioned to Gwinnett, and right-handed reliever **Luis Valdez**, who had no previous major league experience, was recalled from Gwinnett. Hanson was supposed to be called right back after the break so he wouldn't miss a start.

On July 12, **Greg Norton** (ankle) was activated from the disabled list after a rehab stint at Gwinnett, and **Gregor Blanco** was optioned back to Gwinnett.

Jeff Bennett went on the disabled list

June 25 after suffering a fracture in his left hand the previous day when he punched a door behind the dugout because he was upset about giving up the go-ahead hit in the Braves' 8-4 loss to the Yankees. In spite of the break, Bennett pitched the seventh inning before he told the Braves about the injury. He was expected to be out at least three weeks and was replaced on the roster by lefty **Boone Logan**.

Casey Kotchman (lower leg) was activated June 16 after a short rehab stint at Gwinnett. **Jorge Campillo** (shoulder) was transferred to the 60-day disabled list June 11.

THREESOME

The Braves achieved a rarity in the seventh inning June 21 at Fenway Park when **Chipper Jones**, **Bobby Cox** and **Eric O'Flaherty** were all ejected at the same time by home plate umpire **Bill Hohn**. O'Flaherty was the first to go because he was upset with Hohn's strike zone. Jones was next when he intervened and also complained about the umpire's zone and the way he confronted O'Flaherty. Cox came out to protect his players and was thrown out, too, raising his all-time record



total to 145 but only the second of the season. It was the first ejection ever for O'Flaherty and only the sixth of Chipper's career and first since 2007. The Red Sox won the game, 6-5.

MAJOR SCARE

Kenshin Kawakami was struck at the base of the right side of his neck by a line drive off the bat of Yankees pitcher **Joba Chamberlain** in the third inning June 24 at Turner Field. However, the injury wasn't serious and didn't even require X-rays. **Yunel Escobar** fielded the ball after it hit Kawakami and threw out Chamberlain at first base. Kawakami had a bruise, but he barely missed any time. His next start was bumped back just three days.

HELLO!

Brooks Conrad barely had time to try on an Atlanta uniform for the first time before he was sent into the fire and responded with the first home run of his big league career - a pinch-hit three-run shot in the seventh inning July 3 that helped the Braves beat the Nationals, 9-8, at Washington. Conrad, who had just been named to the International League All-Star team, was called up when **Kelly Johnson** was placed on the disabled list with a sore wrist. Picked up from the Oakland organization as a minor league free agent in the off-season, Conrad had 19 at-bats last year for the A's, but this was his first home run. He was hitting .259 with nine home runs, 38 RBIs in 73 games with Gwinnett.

SHORT HOPS

A Javier Vazquez missed his last start before the All-Star break (July 12) due to a strained lower abdominal muscle. He flew back to Atlanta from Chicago July 8 for an MRI, and the Braves thought there was a good chance he could avoid the disabled list.

A Mike Gonzalez missed the last three games before the All-Star break due to tendinitis in his left elbow.

A Nate McLouth missed five games with a strained hamstring in late June. **Yunel Escobar** missed five starts at the same time due to a hip flexor.

WE THINK RYAN CHURCH WILL BE A GOOD ADDITION

WE FEEL LIKE THE TEAM is coming together a little bit, and we hope that will carry us into the second half. We just finished a 5-5 road trip before the All-Star break that easily could have been 7-3 or even 8-2. Losing those close games like we did on that trip is tough.

Our pitching matches up well with anyone in the league, especially the starters and the back end of the bullpen. We're encouraged that the hitting is coming around a little, and now it's a matter of getting it all going at once.

Tim Hudson is looking good and is ready to make some rehab starts. I don't know what we'll do with everyone when he's ready, but we've got another month to figure that out. By then, we'll know a little more about how the season is going to go.

That's the type of situation that seems to have a way of working itself out. It's what you want to have, and we want to hold onto all our pitching, because it's the strength of the club - not just this year but as we look to the future, too.

It was a difficult couple of years for Jeff Francoeur and the organization, through no fault of anyone. The people on our staff - the coaches, Bobby - tried everything to get Jeff going, but it just wasn't working. It was well-publicized that Jeff went outside the organization in the winter to get some help. That didn't cause a problem in the organization. It was a situation where maybe a different voice would help. But that didn't seem to have an effect either.

The trade was a culmination of coming to the conclusion after a couple of years that everyone would be better off with a fresh start.

We feel great about getting Ryan Church. We think he's someone that can give us production in the outfield and not drop off defensively. Our people think he's very good defensively in right field.

The only area he doesn't match Jeff is with his arm, but he still throws plenty well enough. He has more speed, and he can play center field, too. He gives us some abilities that we didn't have out there.

Omar Infante is coming along very well, and should be within weeks of returning - hopefully in July - August 1 at the latest.

Yunel Escobar has had some nagging injuries, but nothing real serious. Bobby is being cautious with him so that he'll only miss a few games, whether it's because of his back or groin, instead of a month to six weeks.

Tommy Hanson was the NL Rookie of the Month for June and has really given us a nice boost. We feel he pitches a lot like a veteran, and we haven't seen the best of him yet. As soon as he gets more comfortable and learns where and how he can get the outs, he'll really flourish.

There's a pretty steep learning curve in the majors. You hope that all the work in the minors will minimize that, and we think it has in his case. And Roger (McDowell) and the other guys on the pitching staff have really encouraged him and added to his development and early success, too.

Martin Prado is the ultimate gamer, and that's the highest compliment you can pay a player. He plays hard. He plays with injuries. He can play just about anywhere. He knows when to turn on the ball and when to drive it and when to slap it. You feel really good when he's in the game.

Brian McCann continues to be an amazing story - making the All-Star team in his first four full years in the majors is almost unheard of. It speaks volumes about the type of player he is and the work he's put in.

I felt we have three pitchers who should have made it, too - Javier Vazquez, Jair Jurrjens and Rafael Soriano. They clearly deserved it, but I think they got overlooked partly because we didn't score enough runs to give them better records.

MARTIN PRADO IS THE ULTIMATE GAMER, AND THAT'S THE HIGHEST COMPLIMENT YOU CAN PAY A PLAYER.

OFF THE FIELD

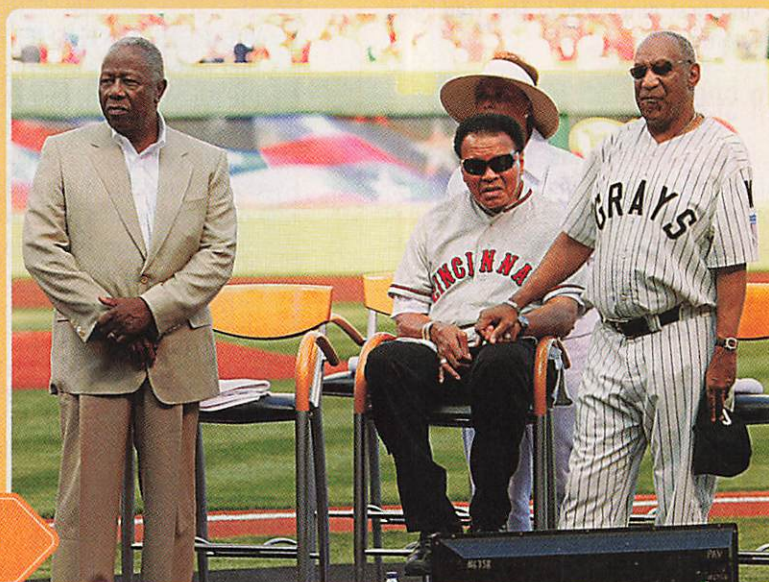
HANK AARON, along with **Muhammad Ali** and **Bill Cosby**, were presented with Beacon Awards during a Major League Baseball luncheon June 20 in Cincinnati prior to the annual Civil Rights Game. Former president **Bill Clinton** gave the keynote address, and CNN's **Soledad O'Brien** served as host.

MLB commissioner **Bud Selig** presented Aaron with the Beacon of Life Award for overcoming racial obstacles just to make it to the majors before then going on to break Babe Ruth's career record with 755 home runs.

Former boxing champion **Sugar Ray Leonard** presented Ali, the legendary former heavyweight champ, with the Beacon of Change Award. Hall of Fame pitcher and former Braves pitching coach (1982-84) **Bob Gibson** presented Cosby with the Beacon of Hope Award.

Beacon Award winners Hank Aaron, Muhammad Ali (seated) and Bill Cosby (R) are introduced in Cincinnati prior to the Civil Rights Game.

THREE BEACONS



JACK HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

PLAYERS' CHOICE

It comes as no surprise to Braves fans, or Braves players and former players, that in a poll of major league players by Sports Illustrated, **Bobby Cox** was voted the manager that most of them would like to play for. Players could not vote for their own manager. The poll was published in the June 29 edition of the magazine. Runnerup was Dodgers manager (and former Braves player and manager) **Joe Torre**. Cox received 25 percent of the vote, and Torre got 16 percent.

BOTTLE EXCHANGE

After 12 years, more than 1,000 home run celebrations, and countless family ballpark memories, the 42-foot-tall Coca-Cola bottle standing watch high above left field at Turner Field was retired on July 2. A new, high-tech version of the classic bottle was to debut July 16 on Sky Field. To commemorate the occasion, the first 15,000 fans at Turner Field on July 2 received a mini replica of the original bottle. The old bottle, which debuted in 1997, was made of more than 11,000 pieces of authentic Atlanta Braves baseball equipment, including 6,680 baseballs, 290 bats and 86 gloves. It stood 435 feet from home plate and 80 feet above the field.

SOLDIERS' FRIEND

Ryan Housley of Tyrone, Ga., who founded HeroBox to support soldiers in combat, was named the Atlanta winner of the "All-Stars Among Us" campaign that spotlights people who have gone above and beyond to serve their communities. He was among the 30 individual team winners honored at the All-Star Game July 14 in St. Louis. The contest was conducted by Major League Baseball and People magazine.

Housley was moved to act by conversa-

tions with a younger brother, **Evan**, who was stationed in Iraq. His nonprofit organization supplies packages customized to soldiers' specific needs. Housley, who was recognized at Turner Field July 1, now works full-time on the project.

LET IT SNOW

The Braves Wives are once again observing Christmas in July by collecting new and unwrapped toys in Monument Grove. The toys will be distributed to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta locations during the Braves' annual "Christmas in July" hospital visits. Fans who donated a toy with a minimum value of \$10 received a special Braves autographed item.

BALLS & STRIKES

A The final Bark in the Park of the season is scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 6. Fans must pre-register their dogs and can do so at braves.com.

A This year's **Chipper Jones** Celebrity Golf Tournament is scheduled Nov. 1-2 at Bear's Best Atlanta in Suwanee. For information, call **Stacy Turner** at (386) 822-8000.



ATLANTA BRAVES

Mike Gonzalez bags groceries for a customer at Publix during the ongoing Shop with the Braves program.



A Clyde "Doc" Partin, a former official scorer at Braves games and a long-time fixture in the press box, died June 17 at age 84. Partin also was the former athletic director at Emory University in Atlanta.

A Hemophilia of Georgia will host its 27th Annual Hit 'Em for Hemophilia Golf Tournament on Oct. 27 at Château Élan Winery and Resort in Braselton, Ga. Many Braves participate each year in the event that is spearheaded by **Bill Acree**, the team's director of team travel and equipment manager. Contact **Vic McCarty** at (770) 518-8272 or vamccarty@hog.org for information on sponsorship and volunteer opportunities.

A **Tommy Hanson** signed autographs in Monument Grove June 30 to benefit the Atlanta Community Food Bank. Fans could donate 20 canned goods or \$20 for one autograph and 40 canned goods or \$40 for two autographs.

A **Tim Hudson**, **David Ross**, and **Buddy Carlyle** greeted fans and participated in store activities, including bagging groceries, assisting with deli customers, and helping prepare samples at the Peachtree City Publix July 2. The Shop with the Braves program continues July 31, Aug. 22 and Sept. 5 at participating stores and allows fans to donate canned goods to the Atlanta Community Food Bank and receive autographs from the participating Braves players.

A Braves broadcaster **Jon Sciambi** and Atlanta Journal-Constitution Braves beat writer **Dave O'Brien** had a Florida Marlins reunion June 27 when they got together for dinner with **Mike Lowell** and former Braves outfielder **Mark Kotsay**, who were in Atlanta with the visiting Red Sox. Sciambi and O'Brien both covered the Marlins in the late 1990s when Kotsay and Lowell played on the team.

A **Greg Maddux** was inducted into the Braves Hall of Fame in a July 17 luncheon, and his uniform No. 31 was retired before that night's game against the Mets. Those events took place after this issue went to press. There will be complete coverage in the September issue of *ChopTalk*.

WE HAVE AS GOOD A SHOT AS ANYONE AT WINNING IT

IT'S ALWAYS TOUGH to say goodbye to a player that came up in your organization. Jeff Francoeur was also from the Atlanta area and was well-liked. But we felt we made the right move in trading Francoeur to the Mets for Ryan Church.

We wanted Church, and they wanted Francoeur, so it was one of those trades that is satisfying for both teams. It's going to be a fresh start for Jeff. He's a great guy, a great teammate. Even when he was struggling, he played hard and always wanted to win.

We're looking forward to seeing what Church will do. He really plays hard and has always caught my eye. We'll wait and see how we're going to work our outfield. I think we'll see some platooning in right field with Church and Matt Diaz, but Church can hit lefties, too.

We have some options in the outfield with Diaz. He can spell Garrett Anderson. I've played Anderson a lot, and Matt hit really well in the first couple of weeks of July. You always want to put the hot bats out there.

My frustration is that I think we should be in first place - or a game or two back. We have a bunch of talent on our team, but we've had some key players out - Chipper Jones for several different things, Brian McCann with his eyes and glasses, Yunel Escobar with his oblique, hip flexor and his back, Garrett Anderson started the season on the disabled list. When you have guys like that missing, it's tough.

I'm thrilled with our pitching. The starting pitching and bullpen has kept us right in the mix.

As far as we're concerned, when we've got our guys healthy, I really believe the hitting will be there in the second half of the season.

Speaking of healthy, having a healthy Tim Hudson back in August will have the same effect of trading for a quality pitcher like Chris Carpenter or Roy Halladay. He's progressed so well during his rehab, went out on his first rehab start in mid-July, and is scheduled to make six or so rehab starts before rejoining the team.

The All-Star break always seems to come at just the right time. It's a long season, and everyone looks forward to a few days off. This year, it seems like we played in a lot of rain-delayed games in the first half. When a game starts late and then runs into extra innings, something else that's happened to us a lot, it feels like you've played a doubleheader. But it's not as if every guy out there doesn't know he's getting paid to play baseball for a living!

So, we enjoy the break in the action, but we know we've got a big job to do if we want to go out there and take the division.

We think we have as good a shot as anyone to win the division. I'm not just saying that! At this point, no one has run away with the division. Every team has had their problems, their injuries, their guys not playing up to where they should be. That's been a little bit of a surprise, but we can take advantage of the situation if we can get healthy, and put together some good series wins.

August is sometimes called the "dog days of summer," and you really do feel like a dog when you're totally out of it and not in the pennant race! But when you're in the hunt for a division title, August and September is when all the fun begins.

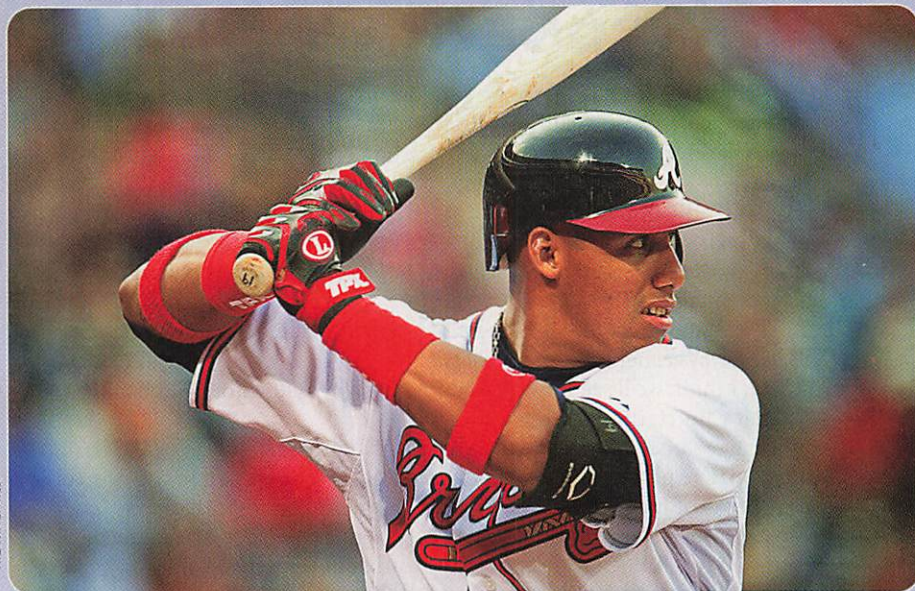
I remember 1991, and I still tell our players about it, when the team was out of first place by nine games at the All-Star break, and in July and August climbed up in the standings and made it a real race. There's so much excitement.

With the talent we have on this team, the pitching and the bats, if they get hot and consistent, I believe they can do it.

MY FRUSTRATION IS THAT I THINK WE SHOULD BE IN FIRST PLACE - OR A GAME OR TWO BACK.

PLAYING PEPPER

YUNEL ESCOBAR



ATLANTA BRAVES

INTERVIEW BY
PATTY RASMUSSEN

CHOPTALK: You were caught a few times early in the season with some over-aggressive baserunning. Did Bobby Cox or anyone else say anything to you about it? Have you changed your style at all because of it, to try to not be quite so risky?

YUNEL ESCOBAR: Yes, Bobby spoke to me about the way I was running the bases, and I know I've been a little too aggressive. I've had to change my style a little bit. This is the way I grew up playing baseball and running the bases, so it is a little tough to change. But I know I have to adjust. I know that sometimes being aggressive creates errors, and I understand that.

CT: Did you watch replays of the two plays in Baltimore (June 21) that led Bobby Cox to take you out of the game (late throw on a doubleplay, and hesitating on a rundown and throwing late to home)?

ESCOBAR: No, and I don't want to talk about that game.

CT: You're a professional and take pride in your work. Can you describe your feeling about being taken out of the game, and did that action motivate you in the next game?

ESCOBAR: I was embarrassed by what

happened, and I wasn't going to let it happen again. I'm going to go out there and get the job done.

CT: So, you are not changing your approach to how you play?

ESCOBAR: No. I'm just going to play my way.

CT: You've had trouble with your right hip flexor. Can you describe the discomfort you feel? Do you have discomfort when you swing?

ESCOBAR: It's located at the top of my thigh. I feel the pain, not everyday but when I really have to push it, when I have to do something out of the ordinary like an explosive movement to the right or left, or the first step out of the batter's box after making contact, because that's the power step.

CT: Is this injury one that will simply linger, one that requires time to heal?

ESCOBAR: Yes, it's something that requires time off to completely heal, but we're not in a position where I can take time off, because when I don't play, you can see the difference. I need to be in the lineup on a

Through 81 games, exactly half of the season, Escobar had 42 RBIs, second on the team to Nate McLouth.

daily basis. It's just a sacrifice I have to make. It's the type of injury that takes weeks to heal. I don't want to be on the DL [disabled list].

CT: When did the hip flexor flare up last season? How do you treat it?

ESCOBAR: It started bugging me slowly and gradually got worse. It's the type of thing that you don't feel during the game. It comes on later when you're relaxing. I do everything I possibly can (to treat it), from heating it up before the game to icing it after the game, taking meds. I have to stay on top of it.

CT: You strained your shoulder late last June, and had trouble with it throughout the second half. Did you do anything special to rehab it during the off-season? Is it full strength now?

ESCOBAR: For two months during the off-season, I worked out with a physical therapist in Miami, near where I live. I did a lot of stretching, ice, heat, and exercises to strengthen the muscles in my shoulder. It feels good now.

CT: Did you do anything to develop such a strong throwing arm, or is it just something that comes naturally?

ESCOBAR: I wasn't born naturally with a lot of arm strength. I've worked very hard to develop a strong throwing arm. I focus a lot of attention in my workout in developing those muscles.

CT: You tied the Atlanta record last year for most times grounding into doubleplays. Are you doing anything differently this year to try to cut down on that?

ESCOBAR: I'm not doing anything different. I am always aware of the situation on the field, but sometimes things just happen. That's part of the game. I don't really focus on not hitting into doubleplays.

CT: Do you have any personal goals this season?

ESCOBAR: As far as number goals go, I want to do better every year. I want my numbers to be higher this year than last year, but mostly I just want to help my team in any way I can and get better and better as a player.

CT: You strained an abdominal muscle doing your traditional "jump" in the on-

deck circle April 16. Was that embarrassing? Are there any lingering effects from the abdominal strain? You aren't jumping anymore.

ESCOBAR: No, it's totally 100 percent now. At the time, I didn't expect it to happen. It's something I've always done. It's part of the show. The doctors don't want me to do it any more, but it's part of me. I feel like it's part of my process of getting ready and mentally prepared, so it's tough not to do it. But I just can't. I feel more comfortable when I'm able to do it, because it's something I've always done.

CT: What do you draw in the dirt with your bat at home plate?

ESCOBAR: I'm not drawing or writing anything in particular. It's just part of my routine.

CT: You display a lot of exuberance for the game, which is good, but it also seems to get you in trouble at times. Are you trying to control your emotions more, or do you not think you need to do that?

ESCOBAR: Showing so much emotion didn't sit well with a lot of people, and I know that I have to be careful. I catch myself so I don't do it as often. As I said, I grew up playing baseball this way, but I know I need to

make sure it doesn't happen.

CT: What's your favorite baseball city to visit, and why?

ESCOBAR: Miami. It's not just because my family lives in Miami, but because the baseball fans in Cuba, especially in the town where I grew up, can watch the games on television, and that's very important to me. I get automatic excitement when we play in

why?

ESCOBAR: I love Atlanta and never want to leave here.

CT: Do you stay in touch with (former Brave now with Kansas City) Brayan Pena?

ESCOBAR: I'm really good friends with Brayan and always stay in contact with him. Regardless of what teams we're on or where we're living, it doesn't affect our friendship.

CT: Who has been most helpful to you in your development as a major leaguer?

ESCOBAR: I had a baseball coach back in Cuba from the time I was eight years old until I was 18 years old. His name is Felipe Barberia, and he taught me how to play - taught me to be this aggressive and to always give my very best. He prepared me for everything, the good and the bad, so that when bad stuff happened, I would be able to play, no matter what.

CT: Who did a better story about your escape from Cuba - ChopTalk (Sept. '07) or Sports Illustrated (April 28, 2008)?

ESCOBAR: I only read your story, not the Sports Illustrated story. I liked the story you wrote.

- Maritza Alarcon and Mike Gonzalez served as interpreters for this interview.

SHOWING SO MUCH EMOTION DIDN'T SIT WELL WITH A LOT OF PEOPLE, AND I KNOW THAT I HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.

Miami, because I know the people in my town will get to see me play.

CT: Other than Miami, what other major league city do you like to visit?

ESCOBAR: New York is great, because there are a lot of different Latin cultures represented there, and I feel comfortable.

CT: What cuisines do you like besides Cuban?

ESCOBAR: I like all sorts of things. I like Dominican food, American food. I like the food they give us here at the ballpark. I like sushi!

CT: Do you like living in Atlanta, and if so,



Escobar is mobbed after his sacrifice fly in the bottom of the ninth inning beat Arizona, 4-3, May 15 at Turner Field.



FOUR-PEAT

McCann's Fourth Straight All-Star Selection Builds On His Growing Legend

BY JON COOPER

BRIAN MCCANN doesn't know what all the fuss is about.

The 25-year-old, who is playing in his fourth full major league season (fifth overall) and is about to make his fourth trip to the All-Star Game (July 14 at St. Louis), just doesn't consider himself that big of a deal. Of course, humility has never been a problem for him.

"I grew up in a family where [not being humble] was unacceptable," said McCann, whose father, Howard, is a former coach at Marshall University and brother, Brad, has played in the Florida and Kansas City organizations. "I thank my parents for that. My older brother would never, ever allow that. I don't play this game for that."

He may not think he's special, but the fans do. McCann received close to 1.5 million votes, second among National League catchers only to the Cardinals' Yadier Molina.

His peers agree.

"He can hit. That's the bottom line. 'Mac' can hit," said Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter, who teamed with McCann during the 2008 World Baseball Classic. "You've got a guy who can hit the ball to both fields, so it's kind of hard to pitch to him. He's one of those guys that you don't really want to see up in a big situation, because he's going to give you a good at-bat."

"I don't like pitching to him," said Philadelphia Phillies ace and 2008 World Series MVP Cole Hamels, who came into 2009 holding lefties to a .245 average, but had been hit at a .375 clip by McCann. "They say that lefties have the advantage in pitching to left-handed hitters, but I think he's the one that definitely proves that's not the case."

"He stays on the ball really well, but his hands are so quick that he can get to the inside pitch. His bat stays in the zone really well, therefore if you're throwing a 90-mile-an-hour fastball or an 80-mile-an-hour changeup or curveball, he stays (in the zone).

McCann, the Braves' lone representative on the NL All-Star team, is the first Brave to be selected four straight years since Greg Maddux was chosen five straight years (1994-98).

ATLANTA BRAVES

"He makes pitchers work really hard," Hamels added. "When he gets in the box, you should be ready to throw about 10 pitches, or you can just throw four and let him take his base."

The respect McCann's earned from opponents is magnified inside the Braves clubhouse.

Chipper Jones believes all of McCann's roads lead to a very big career that is just getting started and includes more than his work with a bat.

"He's certainly earning his respect, both on and off the field," said Jones. "He's a vocal guy. He's probably the guy on the club who is the rah-rah guy."

"He's grown with his leadership skills, he's grown with his athletic ability, he's grown with his hitting prowess, he's grown with his calling of a game behind the plate,

classic was played twice a year from 1959 to 1962 (to help the players' pension fund) and he played in both games in '59, '60 and '62.

"Four times in a row? That's not something I really think about," said McCann, who entered the season leading all big league catchers over the past three years in home runs (65), extra-base hits (178), RBIs (272) and game-winning hits (36). "I put myself in a situation where I try to go out and help my team win every game. I let everything else fall into place. The All-Star Game or Silver Sluggers, all that stuff is on the back-burner. My main priority here is I want to start making the playoffs and start winning championships."

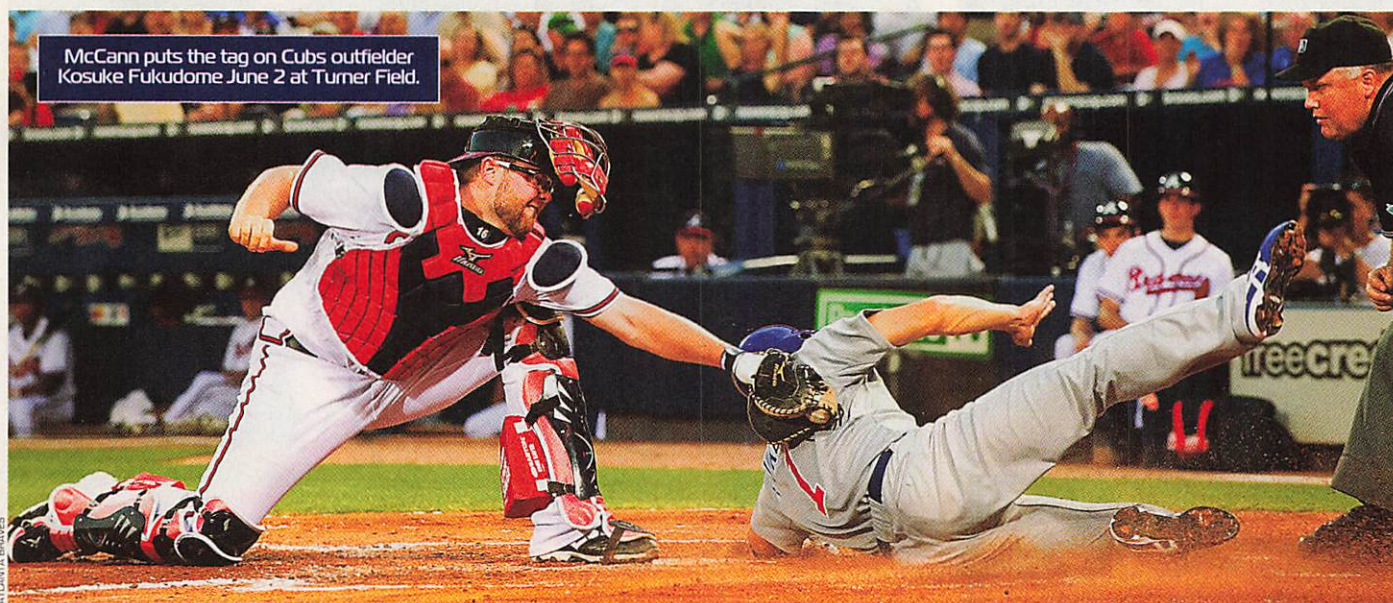
McCann may try to shake off the personal honors, but they're becoming too numerous to ignore. Since 2006, he's won two Silver Sluggers — he's the 10th catcher to win mul-

ninth-inning double against Mets reliever Ken Takahashi for his 500th career hit. The hit came in his 490th game — nine games fewer than it took Hall of Fame third baseman Eddie Mathews; 23 games sooner than it took Hall of Fame catcher Carlton Fisk; and 37 games quicker than future Hall of Famer Pudge Rodriguez. He was six games slower than Johnny Bench, and, for the record, 33 games slower than Chipper.

"It wasn't [important] at all. At all," McCann said of the hit. "Making it to my fourth season was way more important than my 500th hit. I feel like if I'm healthy and I can go out and play, all that stuff is going to come. Five-hundred hits is 500 hits. I'm shooting for more than that."

Only when told who he beat to 500 did any sense of accomplishment register.

"I didn't know that," he said with a brief



handling a pitching staff," Chipper continued. "He's on the path to become a 10-, 12-, 15-time All-Star and a Hall of Famer."

With his selection to the 2009 National League All-Star team, McCann has made the squad in all four of his full major league seasons. He added to his Atlanta Braves catchers' record for All-Star appearances, which he set last year with his third, and became only the third catcher in Braves franchise history to play in the Midsummer Classics in four successive years. Joe Torre, who played in five (1963-67) and Braves Hall of Famer Del Crandall (1953-56), also performed the feat. Crandall's four straight came as part of his run of eight All-Star appearances in 10 years (Crandall actually played in 11 All-Star Games, since the

multiple Silver Sluggers and is one of only four active catchers with more than one — and he ranks third among all catchers in batting average. He also ranks in the top 10 in game-winning RBIs (heading into July, his four game-winners were one off Yunel Escobar's team lead).

He's even become something of a "threat" on the bases, stealing three bases in four tries.

"It's something that as a catcher, being pretty slow, pitchers aren't going to pay too much attention to you," he said. "So, if a first baseman is not holding me on and I feel like I can get to second base, I'm going to try to get into scoring position for the next guy."

Personal milestones really don't seem to matter to McCann. On May 11, he lashed a

smile, about beating Mathews, Fisk and Rodriguez. "That's pretty cool, but, like I said, I just go out there to play the game."

McCann's health is about the only thing that has slowed him. He had an ankle injury in 2006, a finger injury in 2007, and a concussion last season that forced him out of the lineup. But his trip to the DL this April 23 was the most bizarre and potentially most distressing, because problems with blurred vision and left-eye dryness caused him to sit 13 games.

"It was extremely weird. I was nervous at first, then the doctor told me that it was nothing serious with my eye. My eyes had just changed," he said. "This year, I was put in a little adversity, and I'm excited with the way that I've responded to it. I thought I was

BRAVES ALL-STAR CATCHERS

Consecutive Selections

5	Joe Torre	1963-67
4	Brian McCann	2006-09
4	Del Crandall	1953-56
3	Phil Masi	1946-48
3	Del Crandall	1958-60
2	Javy Lopez	1997-98

Total Selections

8	Del Crandall	1953-56, '58-60, '62
5	Joe Torre	1963-67 '63
4	Brian McCann	2006-09
3	Phil Masi	1946-48
3	Javy Lopez	1997-98, 2003
2	Bruce Benedict	1981, '83
1	Ernie Lombardi	1942
1	Walker Cooper	1950
1	Biff Pocoroba	1978
1	Ozzie Virgil	1987
1	Greg Olson	1990
1	Johnny Estrada	2004

Atlanta Multiple Selections

4	Brian McCann	2006-09
2	Joe Torre	1966-67
2	Javy Lopez	1997-98

BENCH-MARK

Brian McCann played his 529th career game on June 28. In a side-by-side comparison through that many games, McCann holds up quite well against legendary Hall of Fame catcher Johnny Bench. McCann, with four straight All-Star appearances, will have to keep it up, though, to catch Bench, who made the All-Star team in his first 13 seasons in the majors (1968-80).

McCann	Category	Bench
.300	Average	.279
546	Hits	545
78	Home Runs	101
326	RBIs	351
135	Doubles	107
.505	Slugging	.497
.364	On-Base Pct.	.329
177	Walks	155

going to miss the majority of the season with this eye thing and then came back and I was able to get glasses and they've worked."

Saying the glasses worked is an understatement. McCann went on the DL hitting .195, with two homers and seven RBIs, but came off the list his old self. Entering July, he was hitting .308, with eight homers and 31 RBIs.

But calling McCann a good hitting catcher is only seeing half the picture.

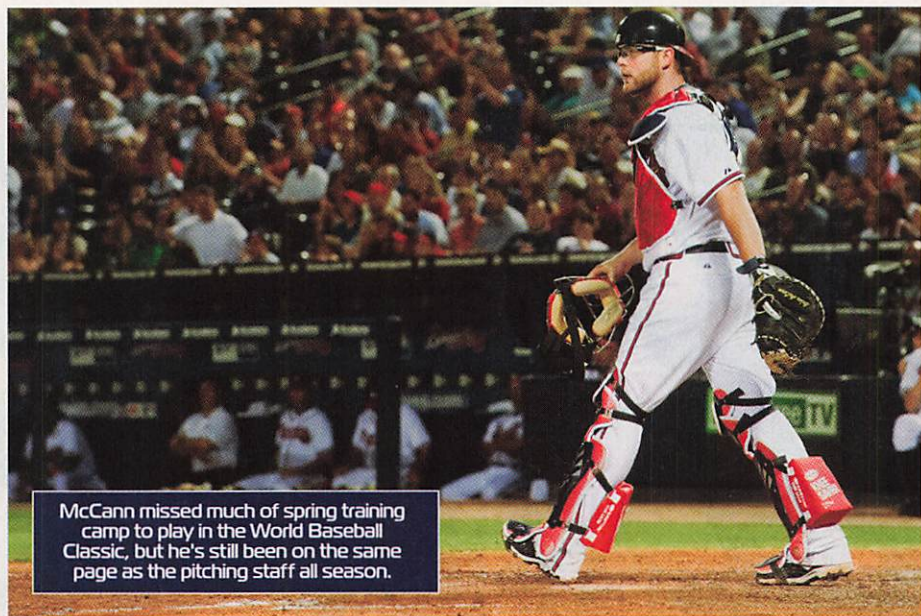
"Brian is one of the classic players in the big leagues," said TBS baseball analyst Buck Martinez, who managed the USA in the inaugural WBC. "He understands what it means to be a catcher, that's the responsibility of handling your pitcher. Most offensive players think their No. 1 priority is to

effort in, so you have to respect the effort that he puts in. We're very lucky to have a guy like that this young and this good. He's one of the best."

He's become as invaluable in the clubhouse as a key vocal leader.

"I think he finally realizes what a role he has on this team," agreed Jeff Francoeur, who has teamed with McCann since the 2003 season in Rome. "It's been fun to watch for me, personally, just knowing him since I was 12, to see him turn into one of the best players in the game."

"He's cutting it up, he'll get on you," said Kelly Johnson. "He's always making guys laugh. He's been like that since he was a rookie and since I've known him. As far as being on the field and handling media and



McCann missed much of spring training camp to play in the World Baseball Classic, but he's still been on the same page as the pitching staff all season.

hit. Brian believes that his No. 1 priority is to catch. That's what makes him so good. His ability to hit, his ability to hit in clutch situations, plus the fact that he plays one of the most important positions on the field brings into focus just how valuable he is to this organization."

When McCann chose to play in the '09 WBC, there was talk that the Braves might have been better served with him in training camp, learning new starters Derek Lowe, Javier Vazquez (who pitched for Puerto Rico), and Kenshin Kawakami. That talk died because McCann and the rotation have been on the same page most of the season.

"He's very good," said Lowe. "He allows you to have a say, too, but there are times he needs to be forceful as far as what he thinks you need to do. He puts the time and

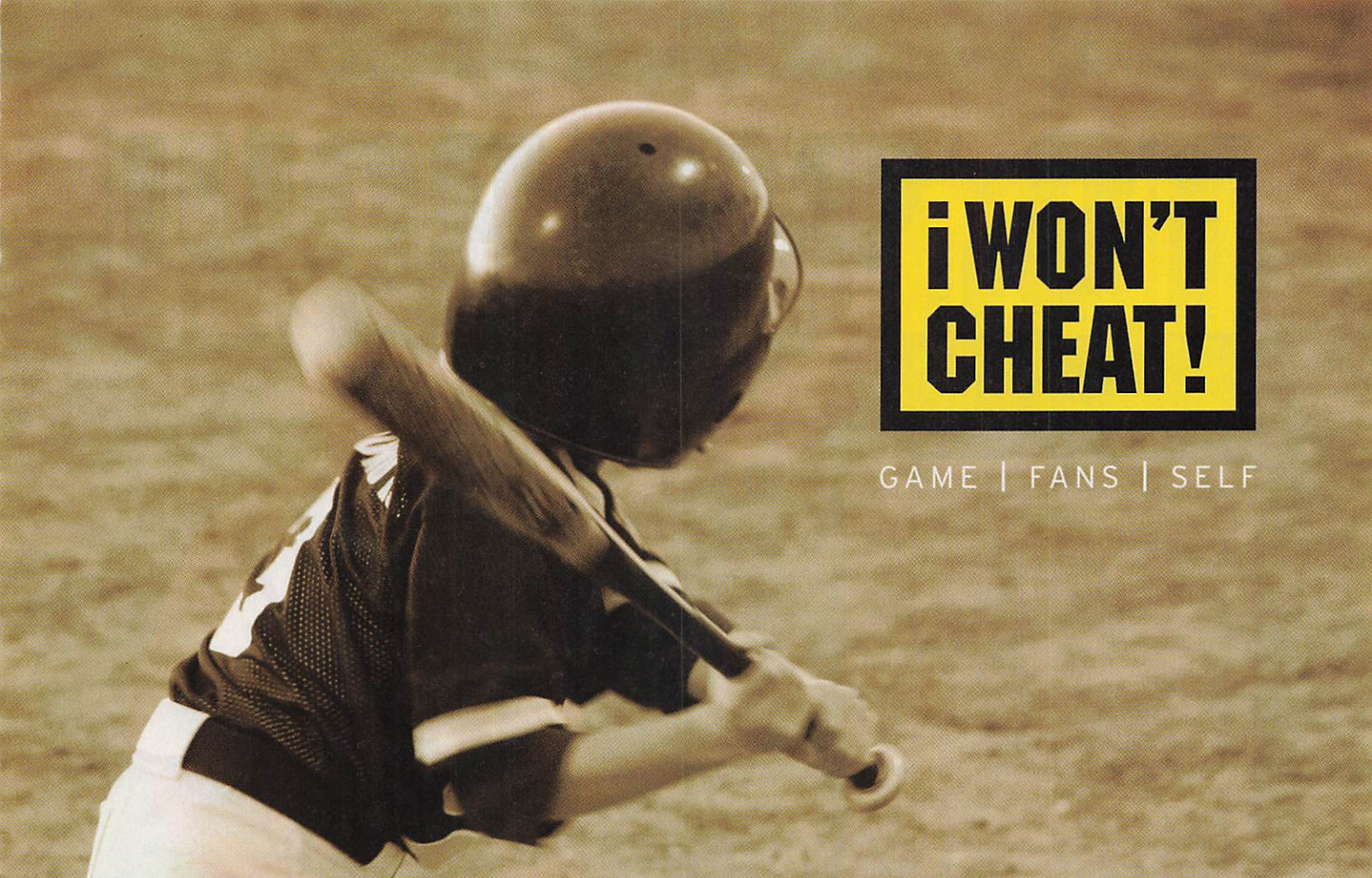
everything else, he's just trying to grow into more of a comfort zone, and I think he has. He's always accessible to the media after games to answer questions. He's made himself the leader of the pitching staff, and as a catcher, that's huge. He's been around now for four or five years, and he's still only 25 years old."

McCann is far from finished growing and learning the game.

"I studied baseball at a young age. My dad coached college baseball, and I was just a student of the game," he said. "I always watched, I always knew the right way to play the game. The right way is to play hard and to play smart."

"The minute you think you've got this thing figured out, it'll come get you."

There's certainly no sign of such complacency sneaking up on McCann.



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2 TIME NL MVP, ATLANTA BRAVES

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TOMMY BOY!

ANYONE QUESTIONING the buildup about Tommy Hanson's arrival in the majors didn't have to wait long to see why there was so much excitement. The 22-year-old righthander retired the first 10 major league hitters he faced in his June 7 debut, including striking out the side in order in just his second inning. Three weeks later, he shut out the Yankees and Red Sox in back-to-back starts, leading to National League Rookie of the Month honors.

Welcome to The Show, Mr. Hanson!

The Braves won all of Hanson's five June starts (4-0, 2.48, .222 opponents' batting average), but he saved his best for his first outing in July when he stretched his personal consecutive scoreless innings streak to 26 before yielding a solo home run to Washington's Adam Dunn in the seventh inning July 4. It was the only run he allowed, though a collapse by the bullpen cost Atlanta a win. It was the first run he allowed since the third inning of his second start June 12 at Baltimore.

By not allowing a run in three consecutive starts, Hanson did something no other Braves pitcher of the modern era (post 1900) has accomplished. He became the first NL rookie to beat the Yankees and Red Sox in consecutive starts and only the second Braves pitcher since 1900 to be 4-0 or better after his first five starts (Larry McWilliams was 4-0 in five starts in 1978).

After his first start, the 6-foot-6 Hanson posted an 0.90 ERA over his next five outings. He is the second Brave named NL Rookie of the Month since the award's inception in 2001, following Jair Jurrjens, who received the honor last June.

SIX PACK

Date	Game	W/L	IP	H	R/ER	BB	SO	ERA
June 7	MIL	ND	6	6	7/6	1	5	9.00
June 12	@BAL	W	5.2	9	2/2	5	5	6.17
June 18	@CIN	W	6	3	0/0	4	2	4.08
June 23	NYN	W	5.1	4	0/0	5	4	3.13
June 28	BOS	W	6	2	0/0	2	2	2.48
July 4	@WAS	ND	7	3	1/1	1	5	2.25



THE START OF SOMETHING SPECIAL: "I HAD 43 PEOPLE HERE FROM CALIFORNIA"

IT WAS DEFINITELY EXCITING having all my family and friends at Turner Field for my major league debut (June 7). I knew it was coming, and I was anxious to get out there - but I'm always that way. I'm not going to say I wasn't nervous, but I wasn't freaking out or anything like that. I felt ready for it.

Between everything leading up to the game, the delay (pushed back one day due to the June 4 rainout), having everyone coming into town, it was exhausting.

I had my dad and step-mom, my three sisters and little brother, my mom was here, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and my junior college coach. I had 43 people here from California, and the delayed start messed up some of the flights. There would have been more people if that hadn't happened!

But it was awesome having them here. I think they were way more excited than I was. It was a hot day, and when it was over, I just came in the clubhouse and laid down. I was beat!

Still, it was one of the most fun experiences I've had playing baseball. I struck out (Milwaukee first baseman) Prince Fielder as my first major league strikeout, and I got that ball. I'll put it up somewhere one of these days, but for now, either my mom or dad will hang onto it for me. It was probably the most memorable moment for me this season, so far.

Going to Fenway Park was unbelievable. We were walking in the tunnel, and Bobby Cox was saying this is where Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and all those guys walked. That's where it really hit me. I went back in the scoreboard, inside the Green Monster, and looked at everything. I was going to sign my name on the wall, but I forgot!

My first win in Baltimore was great, but I didn't think about it as "my first win." I was just glad we won. My goal wasn't to come up here and get wins for me, but to help the team win. So, it was cool.

After my first start and my first win, it was ridiculous how many calls and texts I got from people I hadn't talked to in so long! It's started slowing down now, but it was absurd. I usually keep my phone on at night, but I had to start turning it off, because it was out of control!

I have had more walks than usual for me, though some of them have come from, "I don't want to let that guy beat me." So, I don't mind those. They're positive walks in my mind. Others weren't positive.

I've never had a problem walking guys, in terms of it being some kind of long-term problem. If I walk someone, usually I'm able to understand what I'm doing wrong, and I can fix it. Really, all I'm doing is throwing high and away to lefties, and I'm rushing. Me being a power guy, trying to get down on the mound, trying to throw hard, sometimes I rush too much.

I just have to slow down. It's a mechanical thing. I know what I'm doing wrong, and it's easily fixed. Basically I'm just rushing, and when I do that, I just tell myself, "breathe." That helps me to slow down and take in everything. It's definitely something I realize as I'm doing it.

Every pitch I'm aware, by feel, of what I'm doing wrong. If the

pitch goes in the right spot, I know I'm okay. But if it doesn't, I can feel it right away.

There are certain times when you approach a hitter the same way, because you see that hitter is approaching the at-bat the same way he did before. But Roger McDowell really preaches taking one pitch at a time - make that one pitch, get the ball, make the next pitch - the whole game. The purpose is to not get ahead of myself and not let the hitter dictate how the at-bat or the game is going to turn out.

Playing in the big leagues was what I always wanted to do, but making the big league team is something that you never know when you're going to get there. At the beginning of the year, I thought I was throwing the ball well and that when they needed me, I would be ready to come up.

From high school until now, it's only been five years, so time has gone fast. I'm a totally different pitcher now than I was five years ago. I have more pitches, my velocity is better, plus the things I've learned. It's ridiculous how much more I know about pitching today than five years ago.

The whole goal was to get up here as quickly as possible and to

AFTER MY FIRST START AND MY FIRST WIN, IT WAS RIDICULOUS HOW MANY CALLS AND TEXTS I GOT FROM PEOPLE I HADN'T TALKED TO IN SO LONG!

stay up here. I'm happy with where I'm at right now. I want to keep learning and getting better.

I'm to the point where I can get my pitches where they need to be. If there's anything I'm working on, it's being consistent with my command. That's always going to be a battle, no matter what. Everything has to go perfect for you to put a pitch right where you want it. But I feel pretty confident with what I've got now.

I felt horrible (flu symptoms June 28 vs. Boston at Turner Field). I was as sick as I've felt in a long, long time. I had a fever, sore throat, my body hurt, but I got hydrated and the medicine helped a lot. They gave me a Z-pak (azithromycin), and I think hydrating and resting did the trick. I slept pretty much the whole day and night after they sent me home (June 27, the day before the start).

I think I felt a lot better once I got my blood flowing, and the adrenaline of the game really helped a lot, too. After that, I think sweating it out helped. I felt better after the game and was able to rest on the off day.

I didn't feel 100 percent, but I didn't feel it was affecting me when I was out there (pitching). I was very focused on hitting my spots, locating my pitches. I was just trying to stay out there and go as hard and as long as I could (threw 97 pitches in spite of being sick and the game time temperature being 91 degrees).

Those two outings (5 1/3 shutout innings June 23 vs. Yankees and 6 shutout innings June 28 vs. Red Sox) definitely boosted my confidence. Those are two teams with unreal lineups.



ATLANTA BRAVES

THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

There's No Easy Way About It - Hitting A Round Ball Squarely Is One Tough Assignment

BY RAY GLIER

IN THE CLUTCHES OF A HITTING SLUMP in late June, Kelly Johnson was determined to listen to his own advice more than to all the suggestions he was receiving from others about how to break his slide.

Hitting a baseball is a personal thing, and others simply cannot convey what Johnson feels in the batter's box, so it is on him.

"My rookie season when I struggled, I got caught up in that and wanted to listen to older guys, because I thought they knew something I didn't," Johnson said. "There are some basic fundamentals to the swing,

but as far as adjustments when you are in a slump, you have to go on how you feel.

"No one else can help with that."

After hitting .297 in May, Johnson hit a dreadful .125 in June, and the remedies for his slump popped in and out of his head, as if he had a cold and was standing in the drug store in front of a shelf full of cures.

It is the quandary of every player in a slump. What is the remedy?

It is a complicated diagnosis the hitter must come up with in four-tenths of a second - the time it takes a 94-95 mph fastball

to travel 60 feet, 6 inches. Only hiccups are faster.

The most successful hitters in the game succeed just three out of 10 times. The hitter who last succeeded in hitting four safe balls out of 10 over the course of a full season retired almost 50 years ago.

That was Ted Williams, who never had to defend Shaq in the post, or try to stop Wayne Gretzky on the breakaway. But Williams, who batted .406 in 1941, always said he was certain that hitting a baseball is the most difficult thing to do in sports.

Consider everything a player has to deal with at the plate, and it's easy to understand why he came to that conclusion.

The ball is traveling 92-96 miles per hour, give or take a couple of mphs. Major league pitchers throw a variety of off-speed pitches from changeups to curveballs, plus a slider, which is just down a notch from a fastball and breaks quickly. The pitchers are usually able to throw strikes on both sides of the plate, and rarely throw it down the middle.

The pitchers also come from different arm angles, which can make it tough to pick up the ball out of the pitcher's hand. It doesn't help that professional outfielders can run down line drives, and infielders can spear seemingly "sure" hits, even when the batter hits the ball squarely.

"You have a round ball, a round bat, a moving object, everything about it is unnatural," said Matt Diaz. "There are multi-millionaires trying to keep you from hitting it, and occasionally, you better get the heck out of the way because the ball hurts when it hits you."

Hitting is tough enough for a healthy player, but many are at the plate trying to accomplish the daunting task in spite of nursing assorted aches and pains.

"If you can't make adjustments when your foot hurts, or your shoulder hurts, you won't last in this game," said Chipper Jones. "You're going to have to endure some pain and hit with it. Nothing feels great every day, so one thing you have to do is adjust when you don't feel 100 percent."

The challenge of hitting requires simple goals - simply making contact - because hit-



Patrick Drane, a mechanical engineer who studies bat-ball collisions at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, knows that the difference between a popup and a line drive can amount to a mere hundredths of an inch on the bat.

ting on the big league level is so hard to do.

"Squaring up the ball is the hardest part," said Garrett Anderson. "Your timing is going to come and go during the season - you deal with that. Squaring up the ball is hard when they [pitchers] are spinning it and changing speeds."

Patrick Drane, the assistant director of the Baseball Research Center at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, who studies ball-bat collisions, said Anderson is exactly right about the importance of squaring up the ball, or "hitting it on the screws" as ballplayers say.

"The impact point makes all of the difference in how efficient the collision is and therefore changes the batted-ball speed

simple, but it's not. That's a challenge."

From the view of television's centerfield camera, the baseball looks easy to hit, almost like it is on a tee. The viewer sees one thing - the batter quite another.

"TV is unfair to hitters," said Glenn Hubbard, the Braves' first base coach, who played 12 seasons in the majors. "It looks like it is floating in there, easy to hit."

Hubbard said he attended a "fantasy camp" that featured former big league starters Len Barker and Rick Camp who were dealing to campers who must have watched baseball on TV. Their curveballs were unhittable by the campers, and both pitchers had been out of the game for several years.

The campers complained that it was too hard to hit, but they wanted the real thing, and couldn't cope. Reality looked much different than TV.

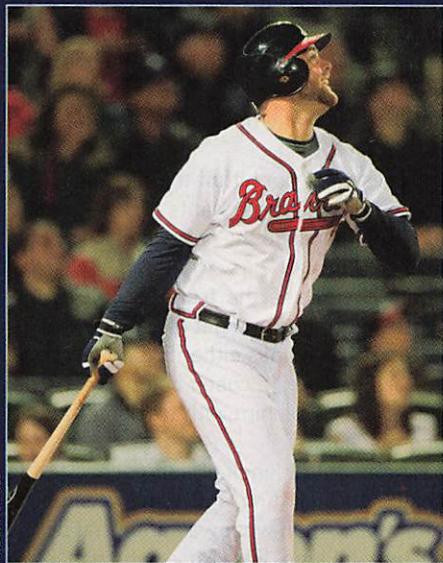
"If somebody could stand in on a 90 mile per hour fastball, you would be amazed how little you see of the ball," said Brian McCann. "If you don't hit every day, and just step in there, you would have a hard time seeing it."

Former basketball superstar Michael Jordan, considered one of the greatest athletes of all-time, tried to play pro baseball in 1994 and quit after hitting just .202 for a White Sox farm team.

"People don't understand when they see you miss that fastball on TV, that you have the changeup in the back of your head you think the pitcher might throw, or the slider, or the cutter," McCann said. "The pitcher has so many pitches that you just can't go up there and say, 'Oh, here comes a fastball.'"

"People don't understand when they see you miss that fastball on TV, that you have the changeup in the back of your head you think the pitcher might throw, or the slider, or the cutter..."

- Brian McCann



Brian McCann is an All-Star, a Silver Slugger winner, and one of the best hitters in the National League, yet he still makes outs roughly seven out of every 10 times he bats.

and distance," Drane said. "The slightest difference in squareness of the impact, either undercutting or getting on top of the ball even by hundredths of an inch, will change the trajectory of the batted ball, as well as the spin of the ball that affect the aerodynamics. During the collision, that bat vibrates and therefore different impact locations will result in the ball slicing or being pulled as it comes off the bat. These properties are just some of the variables that make hitting the ball difficult."

How, then, does a ballplayer try to keep it simple?

"I try and swing at good pitches," said Nate McLouth. "The more good pitches you swing at, the better off you are going to be. It sounds

Johnson said the challenge of hitting is doing everything right one day and making outs, and then coming back the next day, feeling over-matched, yet getting hits.

"A couple of days ago, I had three doubles, and it's like, 'How did that happen?' The ball is coming in, I react, I throw my hands at it, and I hit it in the gap," he said. "Why is it one day I don't see the ball that great, don't feel good in the box, and I get three doubles, and another day I see the ball great, get good pitches, and make outs?"

"It's a battle every single day, except for a few like (Albert) Pujols. You have to stay positive. You have to stay focused."

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



AROUND

BASEBALL

BY KEN ROSENTHAL

METS COULD HAVE USED HAIRSTON'S ADDED POP

IF ANY TEAM needed **Scott Hairston**, it was the Mets. Hairston, playing his home games at Petco Park, hit 10 home runs for the Padres, a total that would have tied him with **Gary Sheffield** for the Mets' team lead at the time he was traded to the A's. Yet, the Mets barely were a factor in the Hairston discussions, balking when the Padres asked for righthander **Bobby Parnell**.

The Phillies, while pursuing free-agent righthander **Pedro Martinez** and expressing interest in Blue Jays righty **Roy Halladay**, continued their quest to land a right-handed bat. They offered two minor-league pitchers for Hairston, but the A's offered three. The Rockies' **Ryan Spilborghs** was another Phillies' target, but the Rox were reluctant to move Spilborghs after they roared back into contention.

The Marlins took runs at Orioles closer **George Sherrill**, Pirates closer **Matt Capps** and Red Sox righthander **Manny Delcarmen** in early July, to no avail. The team's temporary solution was to sign free-agent righties **Luis Ayala** and **Brendan Donnelly**, and consider another righty retread, **Scott Williamson**, whom they had stashed in their system after his release by the Tigers.

Add Padres shortstop **Everth Cabrera** to the list of success stories from the Rule 5 draft. Padres GM **Kevin Towers** predicts that Cabrera, selected from the Rockies last winter for \$50,000, will be "every bit of (**Rafael Furcal**) in the very near future." Second baseman **David Eckstein** said, "There is not anybody in the league with better range and a better arm at shortstop."

Dodgers lefthander **Randy Wolf**, with 12 no-decisions in 19 starts, could approach **Bert Blyleven**'s record of 20 no-decisions in a season. Wolf is aware of the mark, and recently shared with reporters a wry quote from Blyleven: "I played on a team that loved to score late." Actually, things did not work out too badly for Blyleven during his record season in 1979. His team, the Pirates, won the World Series.

One reason the Brewers were interested in Diamondbacks lefthander **Doug Davis**: They knew that they undervalued Davis in his first stint with the club. Desperate for catching, the Brewers traded Davis in a six-player deal that brought them former Braves catcher **Johnny Estrada** on Nov. 25, 2006. Estrada lasted one season with the club.

Virtually every NL contender, including the Reds and Giants, tried to acquire former Brave **Mark DeRosa** from the Indians. The Indians saved slightly less than \$3 million on the deal with St. Louis, no small benefit to their ownership. They also acquired righthander **Chris Perez** and a player to be named for three months of DeRosa. The last time they acquired a PTBN from the Cardinals, it turned out to be a **Coco Crisp**.

Think the Cubs wish they still had **Casey McGehee**? The Brewers claimed McGehee last Oct. 29 after the Cubs dropped him from their 40-man roster. The departure of McGehee, combined with the trade of **Mark DeRosa**, left them without a viable backup at Triple-A once **Aramis Ramirez** was injured.

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

There are different approaches to hitting, but no matter what the approach, there is still a better chance at failure than success.

Jones, last year's National League batting champion (.364), says he lets the ball travel as deep into the strike zone as he can wait and then tries to hit the left-center field wall. He said he and his father developed the toe tap he employs to try and slow him down so he would not jump at pitches.

Anderson, on the other hand, hits the ball out in front of the plate, more often than not because of quick hands. He admits he can be susceptible to the off-speed pitch, but it's impossible to argue with his success - a .296 average and 500 doubles over 16 seasons.

"I have always had quick hands, sometimes that can be a curse for me, too, getting out there too quick," Anderson said. "I always have to fight it and make sure I am staying back on the off-speed pitches."

There are different approaches to pre-game practice, as well.

Diaz will hit 50 balls off the tee before each game. He will take some swings one-handed with a short bat, and he will set up the tee away from him to hit outside pitches, or set up the tee to hit high pitches.

If he's not in the lineup, Diaz also will hit off the tee from the third inning on in the Braves' batting cage to get ready for late-inning pinch-hit duties.

"I have mentally talked myself into believing I don't have any holes in my swing," Diaz said with a laugh.

Anderson will not hit off the tee before a game. He prefers to take a disciplined batting practice before the game to get prepared.

"I try and turn every pitch into a line drive and try and stay on the pitch every BP round and not have any hook swings," Anderson said.

Jones does not hit off the tee before the game, because he wants to see where every ball lands in the outfield during regular BP.

"I want to see the fruits of my labor - that's what helps me get ready," he said.

Johnson will take either 50 swings off the tee or flips from a coach before the game. He says it helps him with tracking the ball and mechanics.

There are all kinds of approaches to the challenge of hitting, but none is simpler, more basic than what was practiced by the all-time hit king, Pete Rose, who had 4,256 hits in his career.

"Pete Rose used to say, 'See the ball, hit the ball,'" said Hubbard. "That was it."

STEEE-RIKE 3!

JAVIER VAZQUEZ showed what he was made of the moment he was inadvertently introduced to Atlanta as "Javy Lopez" by general manager Frank Wren.

Vazquez took being misidentified as his good friend, fellow native of Puerto Rico, and former Braves catcher in good humor and returned to the business at hand.

The ability to laugh at himself has been forged through an 11-plus-year major league career that has seen him battle through his share of adversity while hovering around the .500 mark for his career despite having lights-out stuff. His record (127-129 heading into this season), has been fodder for critics who have labeled him an under-achiever — critics including Ozzie Guillen, his own manager in Chicago last season.

Of course, surviving six seasons with the Montreal Expos, including 2003, when the Expos played "home games" in Puerto Rico, the harsh New York media in 2004, the awful Arizona Diamondbacks in 2005, and finally the oft-brutal comments by Guillen from 2006-08, helped harden his skin and expand his sense of humor.

But it's also no wonder he's so happy to be in Atlanta playing for Bobby Cox.

"I'm loving my time here," said Vazquez, despite a 6-7 record and a seven-start stretch from May 30 through July 2 that saw him go 1-3 with three no-decisions despite allowing two runs or fewer six times. "I feel like I've thrown the ball well. I'm happy to be here and am waiting until we get on a good roll as a team and get into the hunt a little bit.

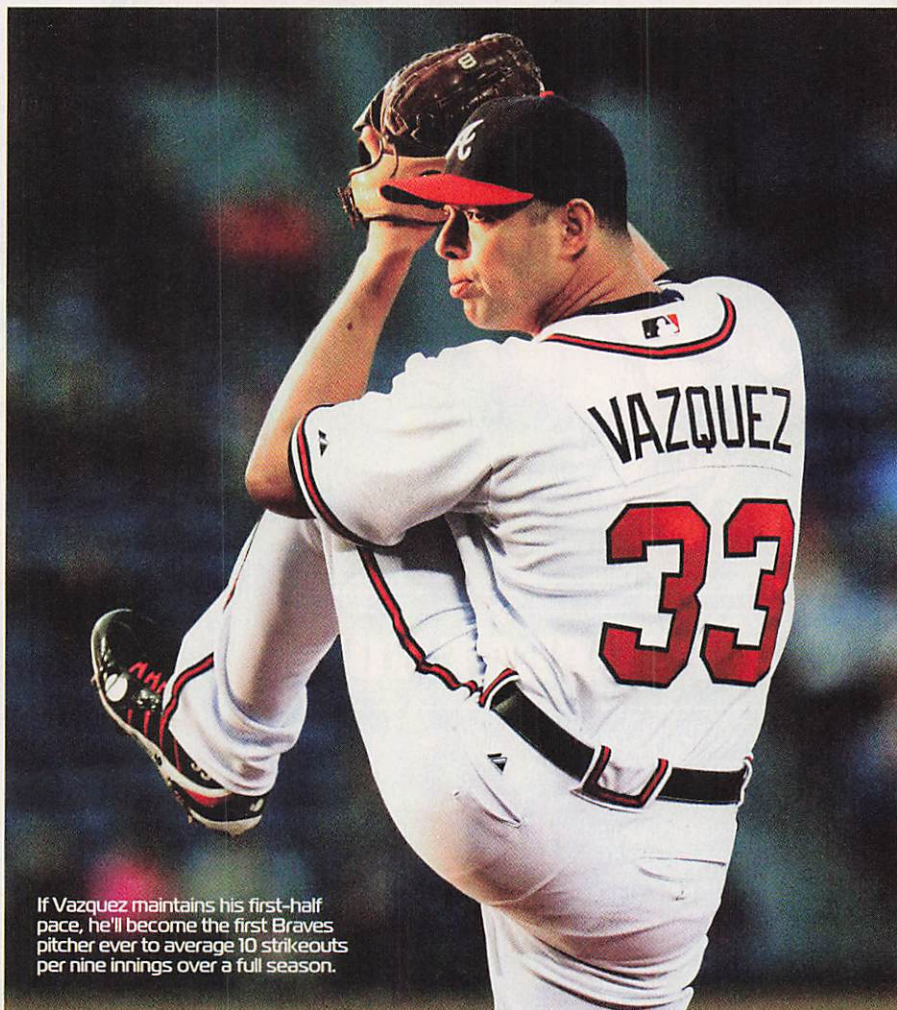
"Bobby's been everything that I heard about him," he added. "He's very professional. He's been awesome."

The same has been said of Vazquez, who's contributing just the way the Braves hoped when they acquired him from the Chicago White Sox last Dec. 4 in a six-player deal (the Braves also received lefty reliever Boone Logan in return for minor leaguers Brent Lillibridge, Tyler Flowers, Jon Gilmore and Santos Rodriguez).

The just turned 33-year-old righthander, who's pitched an average of 206 innings a year, has lived up to his end of the bargain. He headed into July leading the Braves in innings pitched (99), innings per start (6 2/3), and was second in quality starts (11).

It's the way Vazquez has eaten those innings that has been surprising.

Javier Vazquez Is Striking Back At His Reputation By Whiffing Hitters With A Vengeance | By Jon Cooper



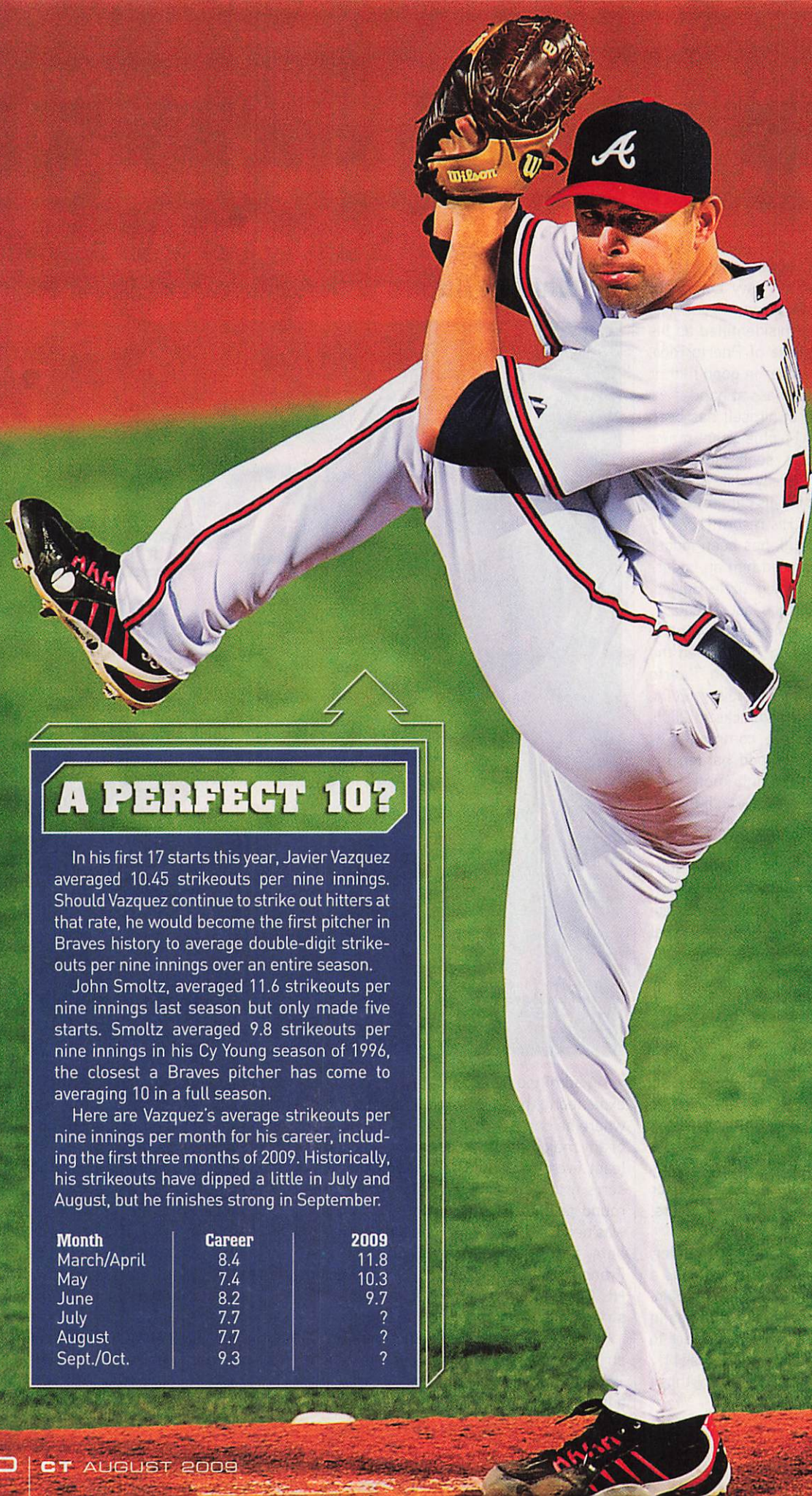
If Vazquez maintains his first-half pace, he'll become the first Braves pitcher ever to average 10 strikeouts per nine innings over a full season.

An admitted flyball pitcher, Vazquez was expected to thrive in spacious Turner Field, where he had a career 3.45 ERA, the lowest of any major league park in which he had at least five decisions. But through the season's first three months, the former fifth-round pick of the Expos in the 1994 draft, was tied for the major league lead in strikeouts per nine innings (10.6), with San Francisco's Tim Lincecum, the defending NL Cy Young Award winner, and his 117 strikeouts were second only to Lincecum.

"I guess because of the numbers I'm a strikeout pitcher," he said with a laugh. "When I was growing up, I didn't strike out a lot of guys. So, I think that's why maybe I

don't consider myself a strikeout guy. Obviously, strikeouts come after more experience. When I first got in the league, I didn't throw that hard. In the minor leagues, after Double-A, then my first year in the bigs, I started throwing a little harder. That helped me, but growing up, I relied more on throwing strikes and getting ahead of hitters, and that's helped me when I started throwing a little harder."

"He's a lot better," said Chipper Jones, who managed only a .264 average with one home run vs. 11 strikeouts against Vazquez as an Expo. "His game, his repertoire is more well-rounded now. He's always had the good fastball with good location. He's



A PERFECT 10?

In his first 17 starts this year, Javier Vazquez averaged 10.45 strikeouts per nine innings. Should Vazquez continue to strike out hitters at that rate, he would become the first pitcher in Braves history to average double-digit strikeouts per nine innings over an entire season.

John Smoltz, averaged 11.6 strikeouts per nine innings last season but only made five starts. Smoltz averaged 9.8 strikeouts per nine innings in his Cy Young season of 1996, the closest a Braves pitcher has come to averaging 10 in a full season.

Here are Vazquez's average strikeouts per nine innings per month for his career, including the first three months of 2009. Historically, his strikeouts have dipped a little in July and August, but he finishes strong in September.

Month	Career	2009
March/April	8.4	11.8
May	7.4	10.3
June	8.2	9.7
July	7.7	?
August	7.7	?
Sept./Oct.	9.3	?

always had the good changeup. Now he's got a curveball and a cutter. So, he's evolving as a pitcher, as well."

The result of that evolution is the strikeouts, which have been climbing steadily. Since the start of the 2007 season, Vazquez is fourth in the majors with a 9.10 strikeouts per nine innings ratio and is seventh in strikeouts-to-walks (4.05).

Vazquez swears he's the same pitcher, doing the same things he always has done.

"Right now, I'm not doing anything different. I'm just trying to pitch, concentrating on every pitch," he said. "The strikeouts, I guess, happen, but I'm not trying to strike out everybody, believe it or not. What can I say? It's a good stat, but I don't think that stat ever tells you whether you're pitching well or not. Strikeouts are good, but they don't tell the whole story."

The story Vazquez is telling is shaping up to be quite impressive. He is on pace for 270 strikeouts, which would be the second-highest season total in Braves franchise history, only six fewer than John Smoltz's 1996 record. His projected 233 innings pitched would be the most since Greg Maddux worked 233 in 2001.

"His consistency has been phenomenal," said Derek Lowe. "He's a guy that easily can have 10 or 11 wins right now. His stuff is off the charts, and his ability to keep it in the strike

zone has been impressive and fun to watch."

"He's got four pitches, he can put them all where he wants, and he can read hitters," added Brian McCann. "He understands. He sees things. He makes his pitches. We're so lucky to have him."

Vazquez has proven a hit with his new teammates. Now he needs them to hit for him.

"He should have three or four more wins under his belt with any run support," said Jones. "Hopefully, we'll get those wins back for him in the second half."

Until they do, Vazquez will continue to roll with the punches, while rolling up the punchouts.

"I can only control what I do on the mound," said Vazquez, who is among NL leaders in opponents' batting average and fewest walks per nine innings. "My job is to pitch and to pitch well and to give my team a chance to win every time I go out. That's the only thing I can control. If we score or not, that's not what I'm here for. I'm here to pitch, and I can't worry about the other thing."

About the only hitting Vazquez does worry about is his own. He's a career .203 hitter with 94 career hits, but is batting only .074 in 2009.

"I'm a little disappointed, because I always thought that I was a better hitter than what I've been this year," he said with

a laugh, even though his 10 sacrifice hits are tied for the most in the majors. "I know I was a little better in my years in Montreal. But I'm working on it."

His commitment and calm, professional demeanor have impressed 23-year-old Jair Jurrjens so much that he's become a role model for him.

"He's always talking about how he started his career with the Montreal Expos when they weren't winning games. Even then, he loved playing the games," said Jurrjens. "He's really mentally tough. To go out there every time and give your best to your team and still not get a win, and stay happy, he always has a smile on his face. It's something I'm trying to pick up, trying to have fun every time I go out there."

"The way he prepares for a start and every time he goes out there and attacks the hitters," Jurrjens added. "He just goes after them with the best stuff he has and trusts it. He makes it look so easy. He's just a great, great teammate. When he's not pitching or I'm not pitching, I sit next to him and just talk about baseball."

So, is the 2009 model Javier Vazquez a case of being older and wiser?

He thought about it, and then laughed.

"I don't know if I'm a little wiser, but a little older...."

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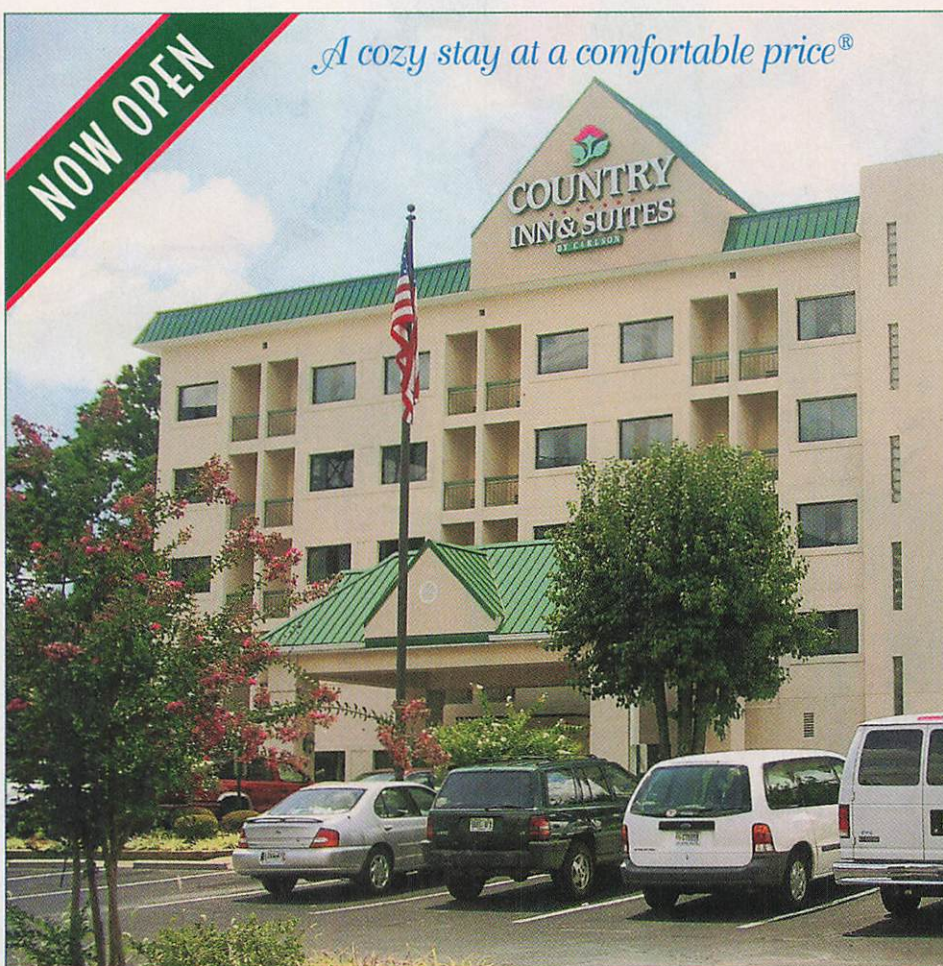
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42.2	IP	299.2
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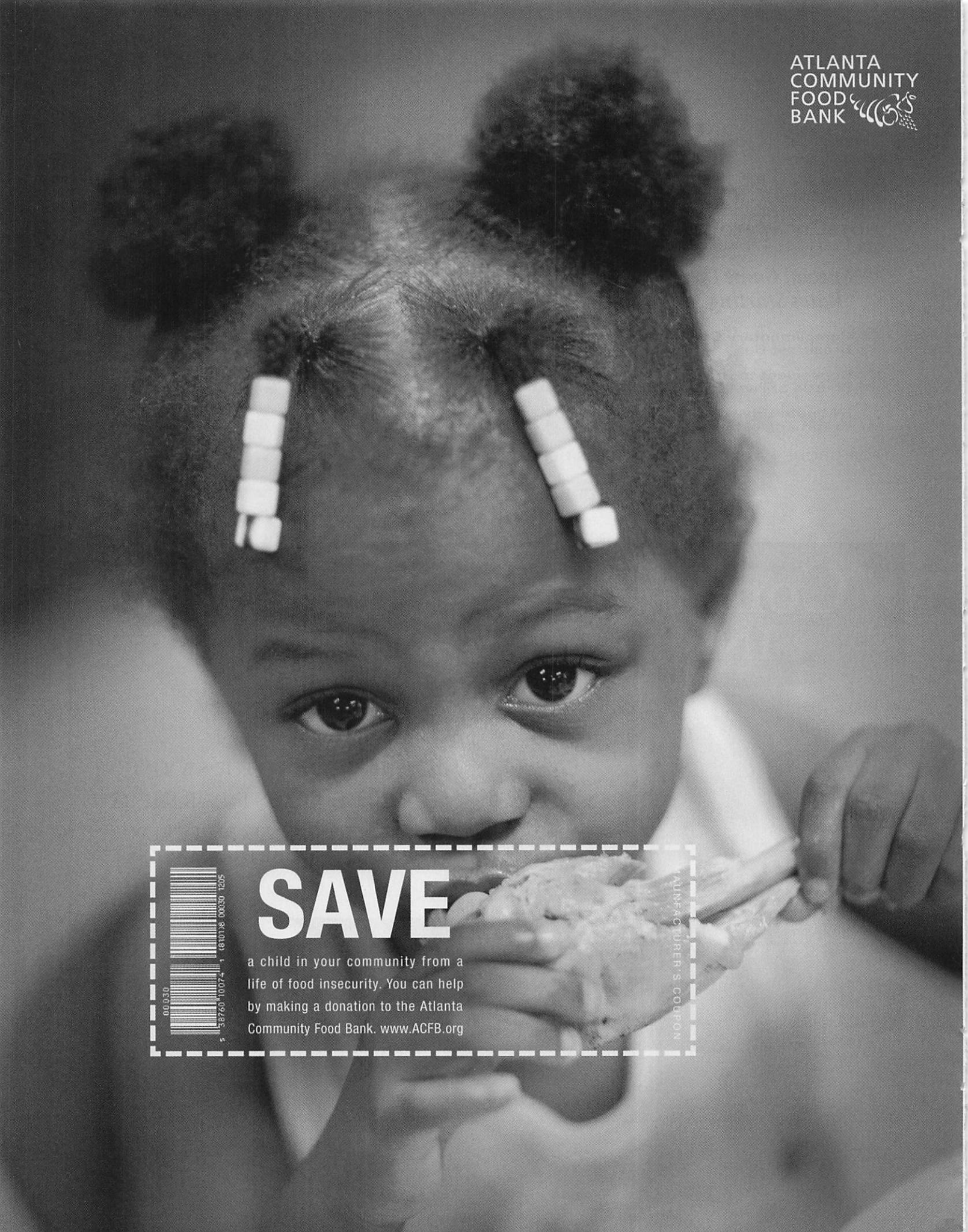


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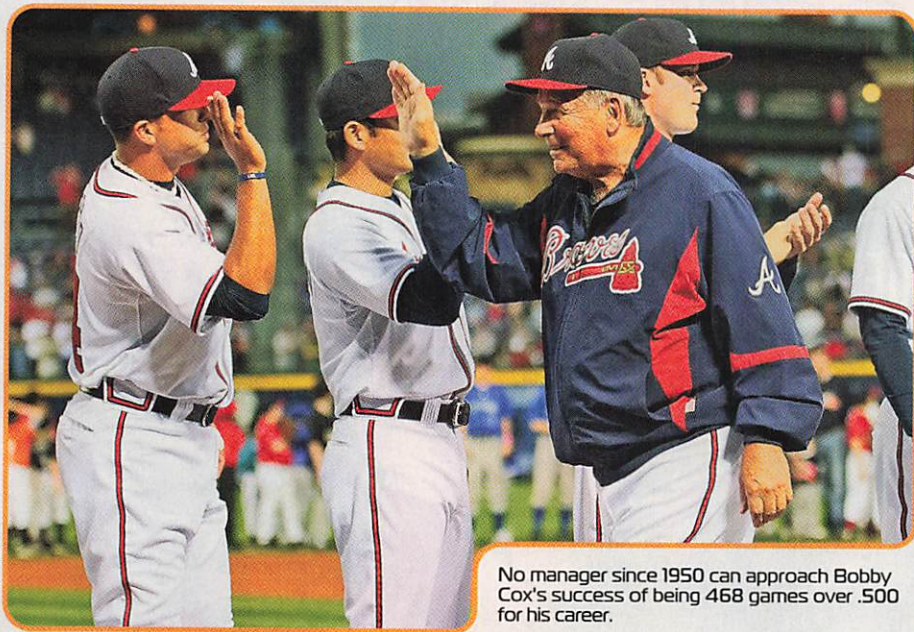
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BEHIND THE NUMBERS

BOBBY COX'S PEERLESS CREDENTIALS



No manager since 1950 can approach Bobby Cox's success of being 468 games over .500 for his career.

BY STEVE FALL

SOME MANAGERS excel at turning teams around. Others can sustain excellence for several years. Very few have excelled in both areas the way Bobby Cox has done.

Since Cox came out of the general manager's office to take over the Braves' dugout on June 22, 1990, the team has won nearly 147 more games than the next closest National League club. Atlanta holds a sensational 1,741-1,279 record in that time frame (through June 29 of this season). The Cardinals placed a distant second at 1,594-1,427. That also gives the Braves the best record in the major leagues, topping the Yankees (1,732-1,286).

After reaching 2,000 victories with the Braves, Cox can now set his sights on 2,400 total career wins. He should reach that plateau by the end of the year.

Overall, Cox's career record (2,362-1,894) puts him 468 games over .500. No other manager since 1950 can match him. And only two managers in all of baseball history – John McGraw (815) and Joe McCarthy (792) – eclipse that figure.

Cox's longevity is even more incredible, considering he managed for six years in the minors, rolling up 459 more victories. Combining that with his 2,362 regular season and 66 post-season wins in the majors, runs his total to an unbelievable 2,887.

Having taken 15 teams to the post-season, Cox leads all managers in major

league history. Dodgers manager (and former Braves manager and player) Joe Torre is next with 14 appearances. Only three other managers have reached double digits: Tony LaRussa (12), Casey Stengel (10) and McGraw (10).

While the 1991 "Worst-to-First" Braves club gets the most attention of any team Cox turned around, he actually resurrected last-place teams in all three of his big league stints. He took over a Toronto Blue Jays club in 1982 that finished last in five straight seasons. After going just 37-69 in the strike-shortened 1981 season, the Jays improved to 78-84 under Cox the next year and placed sixth out of seven AL East clubs. Toronto then went 89-73 in both 1983 and 1984, finishing fourth and second. The 1985 Blue Jays won the AL East and posted the league's top record (99-62), but lost a tough seven-game ALCS to the eventual World Champion Royals.

Consider that Cox's division title with Toronto in 1985 and 14 straight titles with the Braves gave him a personal string of 15 consecutive first-place finishes in full seasons as a manager.

Cox left Toronto after the 1985 season to become the Braves' GM. In those four years with the Jays, his clubs averaged 89 wins. Before Cox arrived, they hadn't won more than 67 games since joining the AL in 1977.

The progress wasn't as rapid in Cox's

previous managerial stint, but he still elevated the Braves to .500 after several poor seasons. Coming off a 61-101 campaign in 1977, the club gave Cox his first big league managing job. They went 69-93 and 66-94 before jumping to 81-80 in 1980. Prior to that, the Braves had not come close to the .500 mark since 1974.

As the Braves approached the season's halfway point, they had their lowest runs per game figure (4.11) since 1989 (3.63). They ranked 13th among 16 NL teams in total runs scored (308). That's on pace with the 2001 Braves for the club's lowest ranking ever. Atlanta also finished 12th among 12 NL clubs in 1988 when it scratched for just 555 runs.

Despite the low runs total, the Braves have been coming through in key situations. They owned a major league-best .431 batting average with the bases loaded. However, they had just three extra base hits – all doubles – in their 58 at-bats in these situations. With two outs and runners in scoring position, the Braves were batting .301. That paced the majors by a wide margin. The Angels came next at .280. Atlanta also owned a strong on-base percentage (.395) and slugging percentage (.459) in these situations.

The Braves' first-half scoring woes resulted from a lack of power and patience. They placed 13th in the NL with 58 home runs. Their 253 walks ranked 12th. That marked a huge drop from 2008 when only two NL clubs drew more walks than Atlanta.

Rafael Soriano continues to post sensational qualitative numbers. He had the sixth-lowest career batting average allowed (.196) in major league history among pitchers with 250 innings. That trailed only Carlos Marmol (.183), Francisco Rodriguez (.187), Troy Percival (.188), Billy Wagner (.189) and Armando Benitez (.195).

Among pitchers with at least 100 career innings in an Atlanta Braves uniform, only Terry Forster (2.29) had a better earned run average than Soriano (2.44). He also had struck out 9.91 batters per nine innings since being acquired from Seattle in exchange for Horacio Ramirez in 2007. That trailed only John Rocker (11.93), Javier Vazquez (10.55) and Mark Wohlers (10.18).

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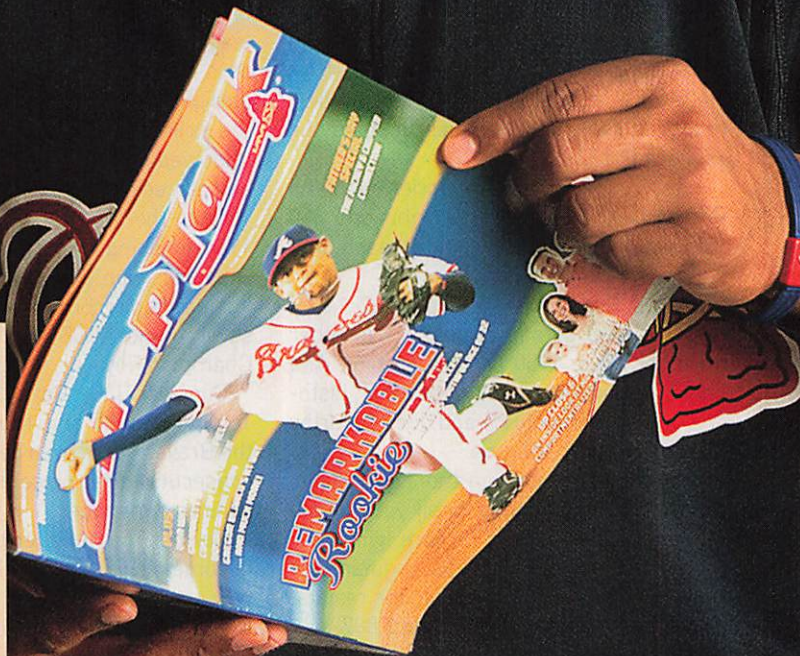
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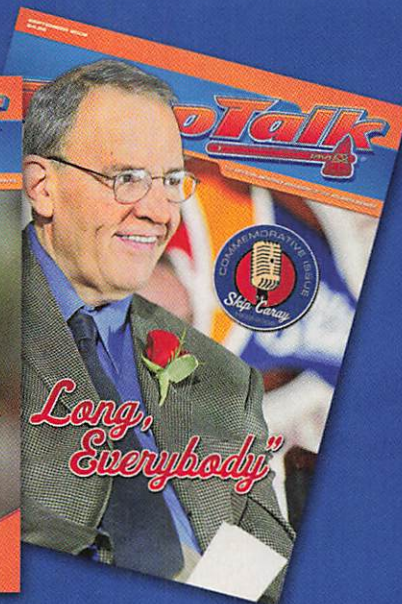
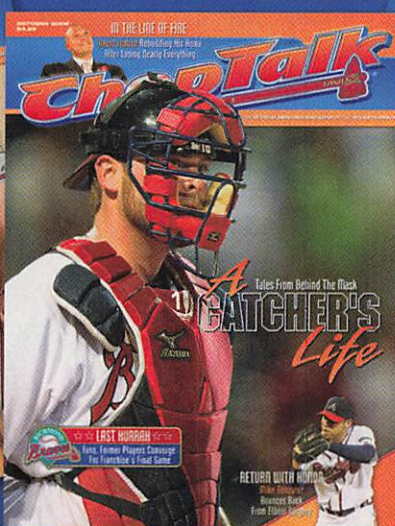
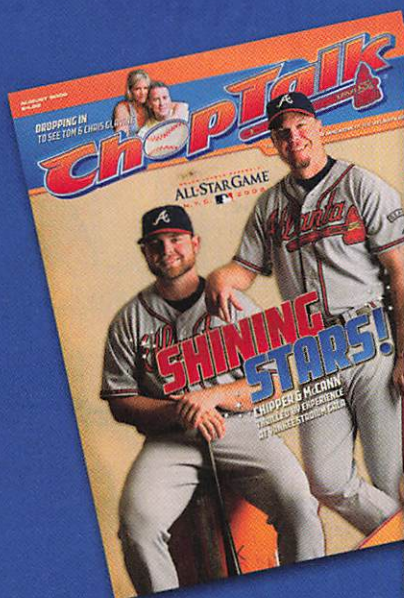


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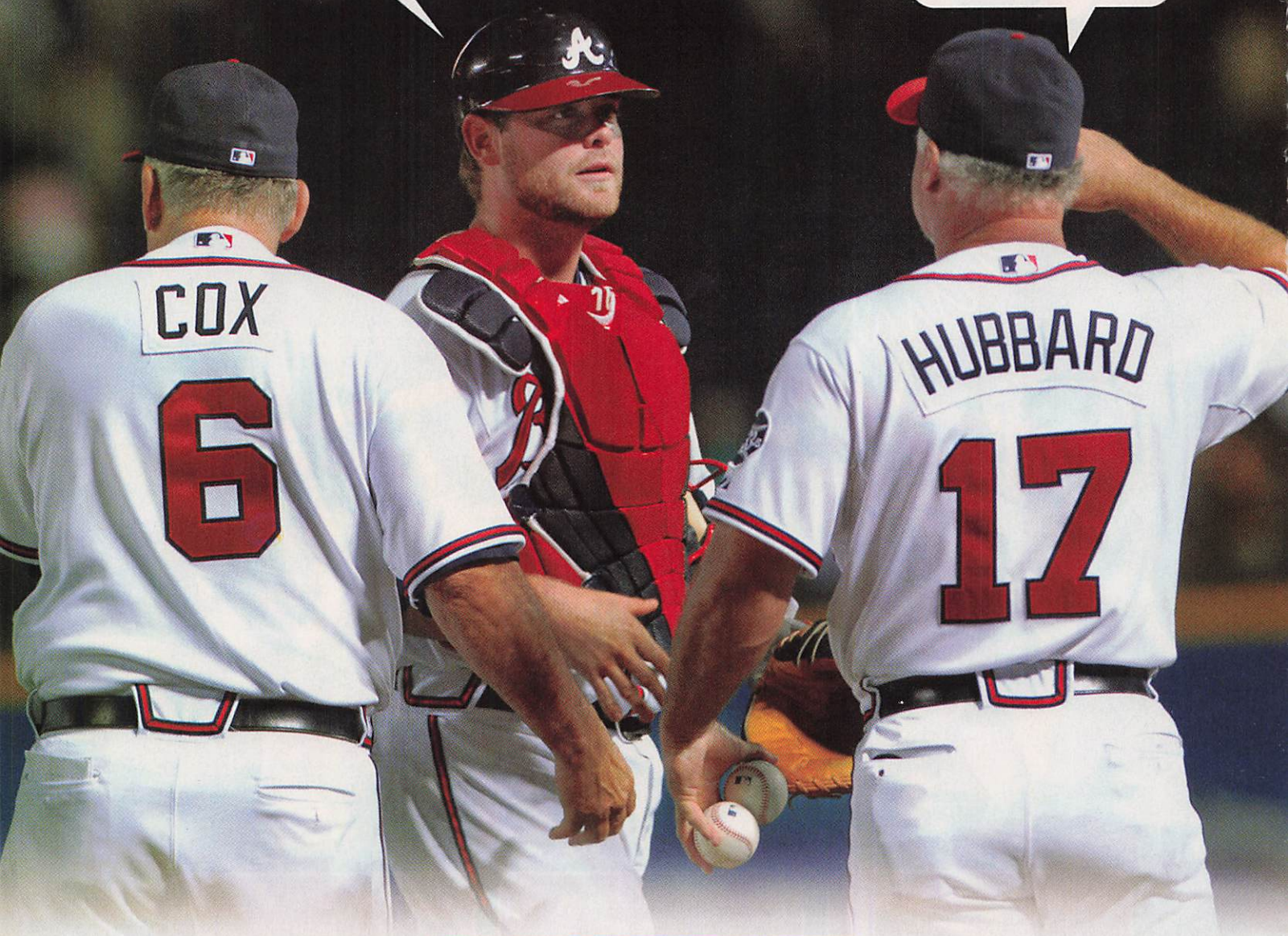
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May 2005 Andruw Jones
June 2005 Tim Hudson
July 2005 Kyle Davies
August 2005 Johnson & Langerhans
September 2005 Jeff Francoeur
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November 2005 Brian McCann
December 2005 Andruw Jones
January 2006 Edgar Renteria
February 2006 Niekro, Aaron, Lemaster
March 2006 LaRoche Family
April 2006 Andruw, Smoltz, Chipper
May 2006 Chris Reitsma
June 2006 Francoeur's Slam
July 2006 Edgar Renteria
August 2006 Brian McCann

September 2006 Bob Wickman
October 2006 John Smoltz
November 2006 Bobby Cox
December 2006 Jeff Francoeur
January 2007 Rafael Soriano
February 2007 Spring Training
March 2007 Mike Gonzalez
April 2007 Andruw Jones (Sold Out)
May 2007 Hubbard & Johnson (Sold Out)
June 2007 John Smoltz
July 2007 Diaz & Harris
August 2007 Edgar Renteria
September 2007 Mark Teixeira
October 2007 Jeff Francoeur
November 2007 Chipper Jones
December 2007 John Smoltz
January 2008 Tom Glavine
February 2008 Tim Hudson

March 2008 Mark Kotsay
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May 2008 Brian McCann
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NEW YORK MINUTE

In A Flash, Trade To Mets For Ryan Church Jolts Francoeur's Once-Promising Career

BY MARK BOWMAN
OF MLB.COM

As the past few months came and went, there was growing indication that the Braves may never find a team willing to provide even a marginal return in exchange for Jeff Francoeur.

But that was before the Mets called and proposed a deal to swap a pair of outfielders who both seemingly needed a change of scenery.

Just a few days after recognizing the fourth anniversary of his celebrated major league debut for his hometown team, Francoeur was given the revelation that his days of playing in Atlanta had come to a close.

A few hours before the Braves played the Rockies at Coors Field on July 10, Bobby Cox called Francoeur into his office and told him that he'd been traded to the Mets in exchange for Ryan Church.

To make up for the slight difference in the players' salaries, the Braves also sent approximately \$250,000 to New York.

"You imagine getting traded," Francoeur said. "But you don't imagine getting traded to your biggest rival. The hardest thing to think about right now is coming back to Atlanta next week with the Mets."

With his voice cracking, Francoeur spoke about how weird it will be to emerge from the All-Star break and find himself playing right field for the visiting club at Turner Field.

When he homered in front of the hometown fans during his July 7, 2005, big league debut, Francoeur seemingly started a storybook career that appeared destined to conclude in Atlanta.

But while hitting .243 with 16 homers, a .290 on-base percentage and a .357 slugging percentage since the start of the 2008 season, Francoeur displayed declining skills that led the Braves to start attempting to deal him before last year's All-Star break.

Looking to right himself during this past off-season, Francoeur sought the assistance of Rangers hitting coach Rudy Jaramillo. But while hitting .250 with a .634 OPS this year, he didn't provide the Braves enough reason to believe he was going to regain the promise he showed in 2006,



Ryan Church's best major league season was 2007 when he hit .272 with 15 home runs and 70 RBIs in 144 games for Washington.

when he ended his first full major league season with 29 homers.

"Jeff and our staff worked hard to improve his offense, and obviously he went outside the organization to seek additional help," said Frank Wren. "He probably needed a fresh start to see if he could get it going again."

With Francoeur gone, the Braves will likely platoon Church and Matt Diaz in right field. Diaz will also continue to occasionally spell Garret Anderson in left field.

The left-handed Church has hit .282 with an .822 OPS in his career against right-handed pitchers, and .245 with a .683 OPS against lefthanders.

Church's splits have been even more telling this season, when he's hit .310 with a .784 OPS against righthanders and .167 with a .414 OPS in 48 at-bats against southpaws.

"We like the way he plays the game, and we think he brings some things to our team that we need," Wren said.

Church, who joined the Braves in time for the July 11 game against the Rockies, was

also surprised to learn of this trade. But there has been wide-range speculation that he'd long ago fallen out of favor with Mets manager Jerry Manuel.

"I'm just looking at it as a new start," Church said. "They've got a great organization in Atlanta."

Church's best major league season came in 2007, when he hit .272 with 15 homers and 70 RBIs in 144 games with the Nationals. With the Mets for the first 42 games of the 2008 season, the 30-year-old outfielder hit .311 with nine homers and a .534 slugging percentage.

Church's promising start was derailed by a concussion he suffered while sliding into Yonel Escobar's head during a May 20 game at Turner Field. In the 115 games he's played since then, he has hit .265 with five homers and a .362 slugging percentage.

"He's a good ballplayer," Cox said. "He's always caught your eye."

While Church certainly isn't a superstar, he's seemingly a player that could draw more interest than Francoeur did on the trade market. But for now, the Braves aren't providing any indication that they're looking to deal their new rightfielder.

Francoeur said that he's looking forward to the challenge of playing in New York. While the media scrutiny will certainly be much greater, he will be able to play without the pressures that he faced in Atlanta, always trying to live up to the great expectations that he created during his storybook athletic career at Parkview High School in suburban Atlanta.

"Frenchy was one of the kids you didn't think would be traded," Chipper Jones said. "Maybe a change of scenery will do him some good."

One of the most likable members of the Braves clubhouse, Francoeur said goodbye to his coaches and teammates and took time to tell some media members that he truly enjoyed the opportunity to play in front of the Braves fans.

"I've had nothing but great experiences," Francoeur said. "Nobody can ever take that away from me."



HEYWARD & FREEMAN CONTINUE IMPRESSIVE CLIMB AT EARLY AGE

HAVING RECEIVED PROMOTIONS from Advanced A Myrtle Beach to Double-A Mississippi during the Fourth of July weekend, Freddie Freeman and Jason Heyward, often referred to as "Salt and Pepper," are shaking up Southern League pitchers and giving M-Braves manager Philip Wellman a true one-two combination at the third and fourth spots in the lineup.

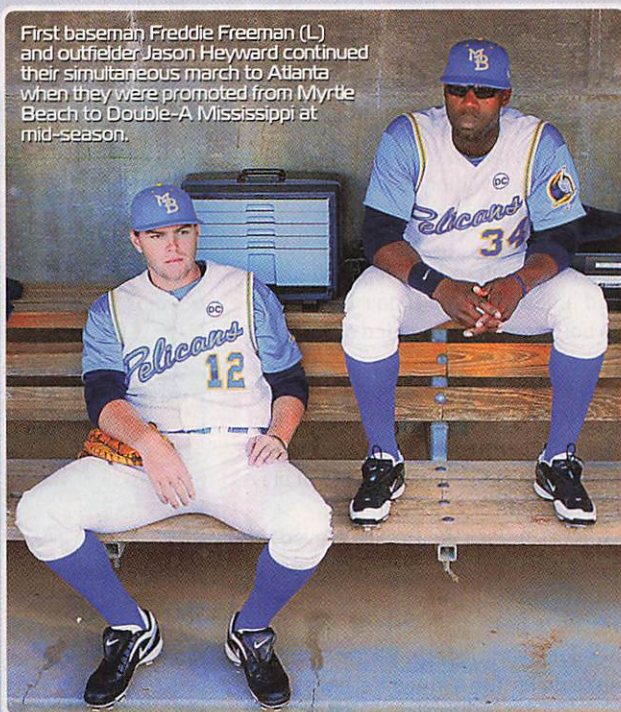
"These are two special young men who have separated themselves at the other levels," said Wellman. "They'll have some adjustments to make, but they both understand that. They want to learn, and they work hard, which is why they're here at such a young age (Heyward turns 20 this month, and Freeman turns 20 in September)."

Heyward, the Braves' first pick and the 14th overall selection in the 2007 draft, batted .296 for the Pelicans with 10 home runs, 34 RBIs and a .519 slugging percentage, which ranked second in the Carolina League. The rightfielder then hit safely in six of his first eight games with Mississippi, a stretch that included three two-hit games and seven RBIs. Freeman, a second-round draft choice in 2007, was third in the Carolina League with a .394 on-base percentage and fifth with a .302 batting average at the time of the promotion. The first baseman also had three two-hit games while recording hits in seven of his first nine games for the M-Braves.

The primary obstacles that slowed the players' productivity in Myrtle Beach were some nagging injuries. Heyward battled inflammation of a hip muscle in early May before missing two weeks with an oblique strain in late May and early June. Freeman had a recurrence of a rib strain that sidelined him during the last week of the 2008 season. Those ailments will continue to be monitored, but the Braves do not believe any are serious or long-term problems.

"We felt like it was a good time for them to step up and face the next challenge," said Kurt Kemp, Atlanta's director of player development. "The quality of their at-bats had been very consistent, and our reports on the defensive progress both of them had made were outstanding. For obvious reasons the first thing most people talk about with these guys is their hitting, but they are productive, well-rounded baseball players."

First baseman Freddie Freeman (L) and outfielder Jason Heyward continued their simultaneous march to Atlanta when they were promoted from Myrtle Beach to Double-A Mississippi at mid-season.



According to Kemp, the Braves also felt comfortable making the mid-season promotions based on the way Heyward and Freeman handled themselves as non-roster invitees to big league spring training camp. In addition to being productive at the age of 19 against veteran pitchers, both players displayed advanced maturity.

"My goal is to learn something and improve every time I go out on the field," said Heyward, who played in the All-Star Futures Game in St. Louis on July 12, when he recorded a single in two at-bats. "You always want to do whatever you need to do in order to get to the next level. That's what makes the game so much fun - making the adjustments and playing the game the way it's supposed to be played."

TEHERAN ON A TEAR

Much was made over the Braves signing pitcher Julio Teheran out of Colombia in 2007 (Dec. '07 CT), particularly after the righthander displayed an impressive array of pitches during Instructional League that fall. Although his performance at rookie-level Danville in 2008 was limited to 15 innings while he battled soreness in his shoulder, Teheran is again making a positive impression during his encore campaign

in the Appalachian League.

The 18-year-old did not allow more than two earned runs in any of his first four starts. He concluded that stretch with a pair of strong seven-inning outings on July 3 and July 8, during which he allowed a total of three earned runs, giving him an ERA of 2.38. Teheran also had a solid 16-to-3 strikeouts-to-walks ratio, though he hit five batters in his first 22 2/3 innings.

Shortly after signing with Atlanta, Teheran was clocked consistently in the mid-90s. His fastball is now in the low 90s and touches 95. His changeup is also above average, while his curveball continues to improve. More importantly, Teheran is learning the nuances of pitching, which includes discovering how to succeed on nights when he does not have his best stuff or command of a particular pitch.

"Julio learned a lot about himself last year," Kemp said. "He knows how his body is going to feel on days after he pitches. He arrived at spring training this year much stronger, and he has maintained that added strength during the first few weeks of the season. We're being patient with him, because we realize he's the age of a high school senior. But he's competing against a lot of guys who have attended four-year colleges."

INTERNATIONAL SIGNINGS

The international signing period opened July 2, and the Braves were active again by coming to terms with two outfielders and a pair of pitchers during the first few days. International scouting director Johnny Almaraz was pleased with the team's early acquisitions and said negotiations were ongoing with a handful of other teenage prospects.

The signings include 16-year-old Erick Maldonado, a 6-foot-2, 185-pound outfielder from Venezuela who impressed the Braves with his raw power and advanced hitting approach. Centerfielder Emanuel Daniel, 17, is from the Dominican Republic, standing 6-foot-1 and weighing 170 pounds. According to Almaraz, Daniel has a chance to be an above-average fielder, and possesses a short swing that produces gap power.

Both pitchers - Jesus Saldejo and Elias Valdez - are 16 years old and come from Venezuela. The right-handed Saldejo's fastball is in the 88-91 mph range, and he mixes it well with an above-average changeup and curveball. Valdez, a lefthander, has good size at 6-foot-3 and 180 pounds. The Braves love his arm action, which produces a good curveball and a decent changeup. His fastball averages 85-89 mph.



The G-Braves were well represented in the Triple-A All-Star game on July 15 at PGE Park in Portland, Ore., with infielders **Barbaro Canizares** and **Wes Timmons** making the cross-country trip. **Brooks Conrad** and reliever **Luis Valdez** were named to the International League all-star team prior to their promotions to Atlanta...

Timmons entered the game having reached base in 36 straight games, then the longest active on-base streak in the IL. He was batting .350 (42-120) with 27 runs and 30 walks during the streak. The last time he failed to reach base was on May 26. Since then, Timmons has raised his batting average from .191 to .282, and he entered the break ranking second in the league with a .425 on-base percentage. His streak included hitting streaks of 12, six and five games...

Canizares, who played in four games with Atlanta in mid-June, entered the break leading the IL with 102 hits. He also was tied for third with 23 doubles and ranked fourth with a .323 batting average. He was a late addition to the World roster in the Futures Game and posted a hit and an RBI in two at-bats. ...

Valdez has continued his strong relief work since signing with the Braves as a minor league free agent prior to last season. The righthander ranked first in the IL with 37 appearances and tied for second with 16 saves prior to debuting with Atlanta on July 12.

Pitching coach **Derek Botelho** served in the same capacity for the U.S. team in the Futures Game. ...

Centerfielder **Jordan Schafer**'s status for the rest of the season is in doubt. He was diagnosed with a deep bruise in his left wrist, but the pain intensified in July after he played in nine games with the G-Braves...

Reliever **Kevin Gunderson** was promoted to Gwinnett on July 3 after posting a 2.93 ERA with two saves and 29 strikeouts in 30.2 innings at Mississippi... Pitcher **Rafael Cruz** was suspended for 50 games, beginning in mid-June, after testing positive for metabolites of Stanozolol, a

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steroid. Signed as a minor league free agent in January, Cruz was 0-2 with a 4.76 ERA in 22 games at Mississippi prior to posting 8 2/3 shutout innings of relief at Gwinnett. He will be eligible to return on Aug. 8.



MISSISSIPPI

DOUBLE A

Centerfielder **Matt Young** and catcher **J.C. Boscan** were starters for the South Division in the Southern League All-Star game on July 13 in Birmingham. Young, who opened the season in left field prior to moving back to center after Gorkys Hernandez was traded to Pittsburgh, played in the game for the second straight season and had one of four hits for the South, which lost, 7-0. The leadoff hitter was batting .280 with 26 stolen bases and a league-best 61 walks through July 13...

Boscan, deemed the top defensive catcher in the SL, is enjoying his best season at the plate as a professional, batting .286 with 27 RBIs in 55 games with Mississippi. He went hitless in two at-bats during the All-Star game...

Pitchers **Kyle Cofield** and **Jonny Venters** were also selected to the SL All-Star Game, and **Scott Diamond** was added to the roster two days prior to the game. A Carolina League All-Star in 2008, Cofield has struggled with his control, issuing a league-high 61 walks versus 58 strikeouts in 92 1/3 innings. He has flown under the radar in terms of prospect status, but the Braves believe he has solid major league potential, particularly once he learns how to hit his spots with more consistency. "His stuff is electric when it's over the plate," Wellman said. "His control continues to improve, but he's still in the process of learning that you have to command your pitches, too..."

Diamond owned a 3-9 record when he was added to the SL All-Star roster, but had given up three earned runs or less in 14 of his 17 starts... Venters did not participate in the game due to being promoted to Gwinnett. He was 4-4 with a 2.76 ERA in 12 starts with the M-Braves prior to moving up to Triple-A in early June...

Ryne Reynoso was named the Southern League Pitcher of the Week for June 22-28 after going 2-0 with a 0.57 ERA in two starts. The righthander allowed only three hits in eight innings against Birmingham on June 23 before surrendering only one earned run in 7 2/3 innings versus West

Tenn on June 28. After getting off to a rocky start this season, Reynoso has allowed more than three earned runs in only one of 13 starts since April 30...

Roosevelt Brown, a resident of nearby Vicksburg who was in his first season as a coach in the Atlanta organization, left the team for unspecified reasons in early July. The M-Braves' new hitting coach is **Billy Nicholson**...

Shortstop **Brandon Hicks** had not been caught in 10 stolen base attempts through July 13. Hicks, however, continued to struggle at the plate, hitting .224 with only four homers and 25 RBIs. He struck out 91 times in his first 84 games/303 at-bats...

The Braves released first baseman **Kala Ka'aihue**, who was hitting .157 with four homers and 15 RBIs in 191 at-bats, when Freeman and Heyward were promoted. Ka'aihue, who had 28 homers in 2006 between Rome and Myrtle Beach, struggled in most of his three stints in Mississippi, although he rebounded in late 2008 to hit .274-14-61. He was hitless in his last 20 at-bats.

TOP 10 CHOPTALK PROSPECTS

- JASON HEYWARD**
OF, Age 19, Mississippi
- FREDDIE FREEMAN**
1B, 19, Mississippi
- CODY JOHNSON**
OF, 20, Myrtle Beach
- BRETT DEVALL**
LHP, 19, Rome
- ZEKE SPRUILL**
RHP, 19, Rome
- CRAIG KIMBREL**
RHP, 21, Myrtle Beach
- JULIO TEHERAN**
RHP, 18, Danville
- RANDALL DELGADO**
RHP, 19, Rome
- JESUS SUCRE**
C, 21, Myrtle Beach
- J.J. HOOVER**
RHP, 21, Rome



MYRTLE BEACH

ADVANCED A

Catcher **Jesus Sucre** made the greatest leap forward in development in the organization during the first half. Sucre followed a strong effort in spring training by hitting .325 with 15 doubles and 18 RBIs in 45 games at Rome to earn a spot on the South Atlantic League Southern Division All-Star team. Promoted to Myrtle Beach at the Class A mid-season break, the 21-year-old from Venezuela continues to display impressive all-around skills and has emerged as one of the top catching prospects in the farm system...

After batting .213 during the first half, second baseman **Michael Fisher** had 20 hits in his first 50 at-bats in the second half, including a nine-game hitting streak from July 3-12, when he was 15-for-33 at the plate...

Replacing Freeman and Heyward on the Myrtle Beach roster were first baseman **Gerry Rodriguez** and rightfielder **Luis Sumoza**, who were promoted from Rome. Rodriguez, who batted .258 with a team-best 11 home runs and 42 RBIs with the R-Braves, went 12-for-34 in his first nine games for the Pelicans. Sumoza, a member of the South Atlantic League All-Star team who was acquired from the Boston farm system in a trade for Mark Kotsay last August, hit .271 at Rome and went 2-for-4 on July 3 in his debut with Myrtle Beach prior to being sent back to Rome on July 13...

Cole Rohrbough allowed 15 earned runs in 14 1/3 innings during his first three starts in July. Rohrbough went 0-2 in that stretch to fall to 4-6 on the season, and his ERA climbed to 5.97. Fortunately, the left-hander is not experiencing any of the physical problems that ruined his 2008 season...

Jacob Thompson has shown signs of becoming the pitcher many scouts projected him to be in 2008 before he encountered a difficult junior season at the University of Virginia. Thompson has learned to handle the emotional ups and downs and become more consistent with his fastball location. His curveball and sinking changeup are above-average...

A week after receiving his promotion to Mississippi, Freeman was named the Carolina League's TOPPS Player of the Month for June in a poll of league managers. In his 24 games during the month, Freeman batted .337 (30-for-89), with two home runs, 12 RBIs and 44 total bases.



ROME

CLASS A

Zeke Spruill had another fine outing on July 7 when he limited Lexington to three hits over eight shutout innings while striking out a season-best 10. The right-handed Spruill continues to show poise and command, resulting in 67 strikeouts versus 14 walks in his first 89 1/3 innings this season...

First baseman **Chais Fuller** picked the right time to hit his first home run for Rome. With his team trailing 4-2 in the top of the eighth inning at Lexington on July 5, Fuller hit a grand slam to give the R-Braves the victory and snap a five-game losing streak...

Catcher **Braeden Schlehuber** cut down 21 of the first 56 runners attempting to steal this season through July 12, good for a .375 success rate...

The R-Braves received pitcher **Tyrelle Harris** and outfielder **Adam Milligan** from Danville on July 3. Harris had a 1.59 ERA and a save in 5 2/3 innings for the D-Braves, including an outing on July 2 in which he threw 15 consecutive strikes. Milligan, a sixth-round draft pick in 2008, ranked fourth in the Appalachian League with a .439 batting average and 10 RBIs in 41 at-bats.



DANVILLE

ROOKIE ADVANCED

Pitcher **Tyler Stovall**, Atlanta's second-round draft pick in 2008, has gotten off to a strong start by going 1-0 with a 2.70 ERA in his first four outings. The lefthander allowed only five earned runs in 16 2/3 innings with 23 strikeouts, but has issued 17 walks during that span...

Centerfielder **L.V. Ware**, who opened the season at Rome, hit safely in 17 of his first 18 games at Danville, including 10 multi-hit outings. Ware went 15-for-31 in his first six games, including a 5-for-6 performance with three runs scored at Pulaski on June 25...

Danville defeated Pulaski 23-7 on July 7 with the help of 22 hits and six Mariners errors. Outfielder **Cory Harriichak** went 5-for-7 with four RBIs and two runs scored, and first baseman **Derek Wiley** hit a pair of home runs...

The trade publication Baseball America suggests that 16th-round draft pick **Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg** could become a fixture in the World Baseball Classic. The first baseman, who also played catcher while

DOWN ON THE
FARM

CODY JOHNSON

I'M LEARNING POWER
COMES WITH CONTACT

BASEBALL IS A GAME of adjustments, and I'm definitely experiencing that reality this year at Myrtle Beach. Freddie Freeman and Jason Heyward were hitting ahead of me in the batting order, and the first game after they were promoted (on July 3), teams were pitching me differently.

When I was hitting in the five hole, at least one of those two guys was almost always on base. That meant the pitcher was often pitching scared, which led to mistakes and meant I had some good pitches to hit.

Now pitchers seem to be really making that effort not to let me beat them. I'll still get a mistake every once in a while, only now I can't afford to miss it. Good pitchers will hit their spots, most of which are on the black at the knees, and I have to try to do what I can with those pitches. My goal is to hit the ball hard somewhere, but I have to be patient in order to get a good pitch to hit.

When we had Freddie, Jason, Donnell (Linares) and myself back-to-back-to-back, it was hard for a pitcher not to make a mistake during that stretch of our lineup. When one of us got on base before the end of the line, the pitcher would have to really bear down and try to avoid throwing a bad pitch. Now we have to find different ways to win. Guys, including myself, have to step up with big hits in order to win ballgames. We're not going to be able to win slugfests. Most of our wins are going to have to be the 3-2, 4-3, 2-1 games.

I feel like I made a lot of adjustments last year at Rome. I came back in the second half with a different attitude. I was more relaxed, and I wasn't constantly putting pressure on myself to perform.

In the first half of the season, I was missing a lot of pitches. In the second half, I was able to slow things down and have more quality at-bats instead of thinking I needed to try to hit a home run every time. I started using the whole field more often and going with the pitch, and I've been able to continue to do that pretty well so far this year.

In high school and early in my professional career, I always had the philosophy of, "Swing hard in case you hit it." I've toned that down a little bit in order to keep from over-swinging. I still take a good, aggressive swing, but I'm trying not to come out of my shoes.

I realize that I've gotten stronger as I've become a little older and that I don't have to swing so hard in order to make good contact. I just have to put the good part of the bat on the ball. When I do that, it's going to be hard for somebody to catch it.

I also believe I'm making improvements with my defense in left field. Last year we got a new outfield coordinator, Lynn Jones, and he's been working with me a lot. He has taught me so many little things about playing defense that have helped me improve.

I still have a long way to go, but three years ago, when I first went out there, I didn't have a clue as to what I was doing. I was lost. Now I feel I can hold my own, even though I still have a lot of work to do.

Overall, I'm happy with the progress I'm making, but I feel there's a lot of room for improvement.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Braves' first-round draft pick in 2006, Cody Johnson has made significant strides at the plate over the past year while continuing to wield as much power as any hitter in the minor leagues. The right-handed-hitting outfielder led the organization with 26 home runs in 2008, and through July 13, he had 22 homers in the pitcher-friendly Carolina League for advanced Class A Myrtle Beach.

I STILL TAKE A GOOD, AGGRESSIVE SWING, BUT I'M TRYING NOT TO COME OUT OF MY SHOES.

FARM STATISTICS



GWINNETT

48-43

INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE TRIPLE A

GWINNETT STADIUM (678) 277-0300

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Barton, Brian (OF)	.255	66	216	24	55	9	4	4	23	26	59	8
Blanco, Gregor (OF)	.242	48	190	33	46	6	1	1	16	27	38	6
Burke, Chris (SS)	.266	22	79	10	21	4	0	2	9	6	11	4
Canizares, Barbaro (1B)	.323	81	316	42	102	23	1	10	47	32	38	1
Colina, Alvin (C)	.248	43	145	14	36	10	0	3	26	14	35	1
Conrad, Brooks (INF)	.259	73	259	46	67	13	0	9	38	37	63	8
Gorecki, Reid	.261	77	257	39	67	18	3	7	30	25	52	12
Hernandez, Diory (SS)	.355	29	110	11	39	12	0	0	20	10	10	5
Holt, J.C. (2B/OF)	.273	66	220	32	60	10	2	0	26	22	41	10
Jones, Brandon (OF)	.300	66	227	25	68	14	0	1	28	30	44	4
Kirkland, Kody (INF)	.289	13	38	5	11	2	0	1	2	4	13	1
Perez, Antonio (SS/2B)	.211	36	90	14	19	3	2	1	7	11	16	3
Pope, Van (3B)	.187	71	219	22	41	13	0	2	20	22	44	1
Sammons, Clint (C)	.213	47	174	17	37	8	0	5	28	11	35	4
Schafer, Jordan (OF)	.229	9	35	6	8	0	0	2	3	2	10	3
Timmons, Wes (INF)	.282	75	209	39	59	15	1	0	20	45	20	10

PITCHERS	WL	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	BB	SO	OBA
Armas, Tony	1-2	4.58	12	11	0	55.0	65	39	21	37	.293
Brownlie, Bobby	1-1	4.15	3	3	0	17.1	17	8	3	13	.262
Bueno, Francisley	4-1	2.93	22	4	1	43.0	36	15	17	25	.229
Cruz, Rafael	1-1	.00	8	0	1	8.2	6	1	2	5	.207
Gamble, Jerome	1-3	5.60	6	4	0	17.2	25	24	13	17	.329
Gomez, Mariano	6-2	2.10	30	0	6	55.2	39	14	23	30	.199
Halama, John	0-3	4.86	6	4	0	33.1	37	19	13	17	.287
Heath, Deunte	0-0	10.03	4	2	0	11.2	16	14	11	9	.314
Huber, Jon	2-0	8.35	12	0	0	18.1	28	17	3	15	.350
Nunez, Vladimir	2-2	2.19	26	2	2	53.1	45	14	28	47	.230
Parr, James	0-1	7.30	3	3	0	12.1	15	10	4	14	.313
Perez, Juan	1-2	1.93	31	0	1	37.1	22	11	22	36	.168
Redmond, Todd	5-6	5.09	18	17	0	93.2	110	60	28	76	.287
Reyes, Jo-Jo	0-1	4.91	4	4	0	11.0	10	7	3	5	.250
Valdez, Luis	3-3	3.00	37	0	16	48.0	43	26	14	47	.235
Venters, Jonny	0-3	6.82	6	6	0	33.0	42	28	14	20	.309



MISSISSIPPI

38-42

SOUTHERN LEAGUE DOUBLE A

TRUSTMARK PARK (601) 664-7600

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Boscan, J.C. (C)	.286	55	196	15	56	12	0	0	27	20	38	2
Britton, Phillip (C)	.239	29	92	7	22	8	0	0	11	5	17	1
Cabrera, Willie (OF)	.252	70	254	29	64	13	0	5	38	27	40	1
Camarena, Jose (C)	.173	19	52	1	9	3	0	0	1	3	5	1
Campbell, Eric (3B)	.254	79	272	19	69	13	1	3	28	30	39	0
Creek, Greg (1B)	.229	66	214	17	49	8	1	4	26	16	44	0
Freeman, Freddie (1B)	.294	9	34	4	10	3	0	0	4	2	2	0
Guzman, Javier (2B)	.087	12	23	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	4	0
Hernandez, Gorkys (OF)	.316	52	212	33	67	11	2	0	19	15	54	10
Heyward, Jason (OF)	.346	8	26	3	9	3	2	0	7	4	0	0
Hicks, Brandon (SS)	.224	84	303	33	68	15	2	4	25	29	91	10
Jones, Travis (2B)	.224	74	228	24	51	9	1	3	21	32	59	13
Ka'aihue, Kala (1B)	.157	69	191	17	30	6	1	4	15	36	64	1
Kirkland, Kody (INF)	.179	55	151	22	27	7	2	3	15	14	37	3
Rodriguez, Concepcion (OF)	.264	78	258	27	68	10	1	2	20	21	44	7
Young, Matt (OF)	.280	90	314	54	88	16	5	2	21	61	47	26

PITCHERS	WL	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	BB	SO	OBA
Butts, Brett	3-2	3.28	35	0	2	46.2	50	19	22	38	.284
Coffield, Kyle	5-3	4.00	17	15	0	92.1	77	45	61	58	.231
Cruz, Rafael	0-2	4.76	22	0	12	22.2	27	13	8	20	.290
Diamond, Scott	3-9	3.47	17	17	0	96.0	108	51	37	81	.285
Dumesnil, Bryan	1-6	4.50	34	0	2	44.0	40	24	26	51	.244
Gamble, Jerome	1-1	3.78	20	1	2	33.1	26	15	20	31	.218
Garrin, Cory	1-2	3.43	16	0	2	21.0	19	8	7	15	.250
Gunderson, Kevin	1-1	2.93	29	0	2	30.2	28	10	14	29	.241
Gustafson, Tim	1-0	6.00	10	0	1	18.0	22	12	9	18	.306
Heath, Deunte	2-5	4.55	13	11	0	61.1	63	37	33	52	.266
Lyman, Jeff	4-6	3.45	21	6	0	60.0	47	27	26	52	.213
Marek, Stephen	3-3	5.08	27	0	1	28.1	26	19	23	23	.250
Osuna, Edgar	2-2	4.81	7	6	0	39.1	37	23	16	24	.245
Reynoso, Ryne	5-5	3.40	17	16	0	98.0	80	41	41	65	.223
Sullivan, Richard	0-1	9.45	3	3	0	13.1	21	15	10	8	.389
Venters, Jonny	4-4	2.76	12	12	0	65.1	60	24	35	40	.251



MYRTLE BEACH

33-51

CAROLINA LEAGUE
ADVANCED A

BBST COASTAL FIELD
(843) 918-8002

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Davis, Quentin (OF)	.227	17	66	8	15	2	2	0	3	4	11	1
Fisher, Michael (2B)	.251	66	247	28	62	10	0	1	21	19	57	3
Freeman, Freddie (1B)	.302	70	255	43	77	19	0	6	34	26	41	1
Gress, Randy (INF)	.164	26	73	6	12	2	0	1	4	8	25	0
Heyward, Jason (OF)	.296	49	189	34	56	12	0	10	31	21	30	4
Johnson, Benji (C)	.232	44	142	13	33	8	0	5	20	13	42	1
Johnson, Cody (OF)	.266	82	286	40	76	16	0	22	62	44	105	8
Kennelly, Mathew (C)	.195	47	159	13	31	4	0	1	6	14	44	0
Lee, C.J. (OF)	.274	53	175	28	48	10	3	2	11	13	50	5
Linares, Donell (3B)	.281	80	310	33	87	17	1	7	49	10	25	2
Lundahl, Chad (SS)	.167	49	168	12	28	8	0	2	11	5	30	0
Marcial, Robert (INF)	.195	46	149	14	29	1	0	1	11	9	41	3
Miles, Cole (OF/2B)	.252	70	250	37	63	3	5	2	16	22	38	9
Owings, Jon (OF)	.208	42	144	11	30	5	3	2	12	11	45	2
Rodriguez, Gerardo (1B)	.353	9	34	8	12	2	1	1	4	3	6	0
Sucre, Jesus (C)	.184	13	49	3	9	2	0	1	2	2	11	0

PITCHERS	WL	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	BB	SO	OBA
Barrett, Eric	1-2	6.08	20	0	0	23.2	24	16	23	24	.267
Beachy, Brandon	2-0	2.37	10	1	0	19.0	17	8	4	16	.243
Broadway, Michael	2-7	5.40	24	1	0	40.0	44	26	25	34	.288
Chapman, Jaye	0-0	5.74	14	0	0	15.2	18	11	11	17	.290
Cordier, Erik	3-3	3.23	14	14	0	64.0	60	27	40	45	.256
Locke, Jeff	1-4	5.52	10	10	0	45.2	47	31	26	43	.272
Mehlich, Michael	1-5	8.31	22	0	2	34.2	44	39	22	29	.306
Ortega, Jose	3-5	3.84	19	10	0	58.2	48	28	19	51	.224
Osuna, Edgar	3-4	3.19	10	10	0	53.2	52	23	11	37	.246
Palica, Thomas	3-1	3.12	29	0	6	34.3	33	17	14	34	.252
Pruneda, Benito	1-1	4.44	21	0	3	26.1	25	15	18	39	.253
Rivas, Carlos	2-3	7.52	8	5	0	26.1	33	27	16	17	.297
Rohrbough, Cole	4-6	5.97	13	13	0	63.1	78	44	31	55	.308
Sullivan, Richard	2-5	4.16	10	10	0	62.2	56	33	24	51	.237
Thompson, Jacob	2-2	3.44	6	5	0	36.2	31	16	16	33	.231
Wilson, Tyler	0-2	4.58	15	0	0	17.2	12	11	14	15	.190



ROME

39-48

SOUTH ATLANTIC LEAGUE
CLASS A

STATE MUTUAL STADIUM
(706) 368-9388

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SE
Barba, Ryan (SS)	.207	76	246	25	51	13	0	2	21	18	44	3
Campusano, Yoel (2B)	.272	56	213	27	58	8	1	2	14	6	29	8
Culver, Calvin (OF)	.248	41	149	16	37	10	0	3	12	28	1	
Fuller, Chais (INF)	.174	47	138	11	24	5	1	1	13	10	33	1
Kennelly, Mathew (C)	.318	13	44	4	14	2	0	1	6	3	5	1
Lee, C.J. (OF)	.239	14	46	4	11	2	0	0	5	3	11	1
Maddox, Craig (DH)	.231	11	39	2	9	0	0	0	1	1	15	1
Moody, Shayne (2B/3B)	.231	35	121	10	28	2	0	0	14	8	17	3
Rodriguez, Gerardo (1B)	.258	63	240	29	62	9	5	11	42	12	69	4
Santamaria, Jahdiel (OF)	.264	50	182	22	48	7	2	0	10	11	34	5
Schlehuber, Braeden (C)	.220	71	246	28	54	19	0	4	26	13	49	4
Shehan, Chris (OF)	.248	66	214	32	53	9	2	2	19	17	53	6
Shultz, Stephen (INF/OF)	.222	51	176	20	39	15	0	4	17	12	56	2
Sime, Samuel (INF)	.258	69	240	36	62	11	4	2	18	13	47	7
Sucre, Jesus (C)	.325	45	169	14	55	15	0	1	18	6	17	1
Sumoza, Luis (OF)	.271	69	266	29	72	17	2	2	20	19	51	5

**DANVILLE****13-7****APPALACHIAN LEAGUE**
ROOKIE ADVANCED**LEGION FIELD**
(434) 797-3792

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Adair, Travis (2B)	.167	14	48	8	8	2	1	0	7	7	8	1
Barnett, Tyler (2B)	.125	6	8	2	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	1
Elorriaga-Matra, Daniel (C)	.128	12	39	2	5	3	0	0	3	1	13	0
Gress, Randy (INF)	.304	7	23	4	7	1	1	0	4	1	3	0
Harrilchak, Cory (OF)	.265	14	49	8	13	2	1	0	8	7	4	4
Hefflinger, Robert (OF)	.302	20	86	12	26	5	0	6	22	7	26	0
Jones, Mycal (SS)	.271	19	70	16	19	3	1	1	10	9	18	5
Kreke, Jordan (3B)	.261	19	69	11	18	3	0	1	7	9	11	1
Marval, Osman (C)	.105	7	19	2	2	2	0	0	4	2	3	0
Miles, Kuyaunnis (OF)	.237	11	38	7	9	2	1	1	3	1	13	1
Milligan, Adam (OF)	.439	9	41	9	18	5	1	2	10	3	7	0
Shimabukuro, Ryohei (1B)	.333	2	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spanjer-Furstenburg, Riaan (1B)	.434	19	76	16	33	5	0	5	18	5	12	0
Ware, L.V. (OF)	.383	18	81	14	31	7	3	0	9	4	11	0
Whitmer, Jace (C)	.200	12	45	3	9	1	0	0	2	4	18	0
Wiley, Derek (1B)	.192	9	26	6	5	1	0	2	3	1	8	0

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	BB	SO	OBA
Accomando, Dennis	0-0	12.00	2	0	0	3.0	5	4	2	1	.357
Avilan, Luis	0-2	5.40	4	2	0	13.1	13	8	8	10	.265
Barrett, Eric	0-0	54.00	1	0	0	.1	0	2	2	0	.000
Berryhill, Thomas	0-1	2.57	7	0	5	7.0	4	2	5	7	.154
Crim, Matthew	3-0	4.24	4	2	0	17.0	20	10	4	16	.286
Harris, Tyrelle	0-0	1.59	3	0	1	5.2	5	1	0	9	.227
Himpsl, Derick	1-0	6.75	5	0	0	6.2	3	5	7	11	.125
Hodges, Casey	1-0	5.87	3	0	0	7.2	9	6	5	5	.281
Lorick, Jeffrey	1-1	7.82	5	2	1	12.2	14	12	6	17	.280
Masters, Christopher	2-2	1.62	4	2	0	16.2	14	6	1	28	.230
Oberholtzer, Brett	1-0	.82	4	4	0	22.0	11	3	4	23	.145
Railsback, Cody	0-0	3.38	4	0	0	2.2	1	1	3	3	.125
Rasmus, Cory	1-0	2.63	4	0	1	13.2	12	5	6	16	.235
Stovall, Tyler	1-0	2.70	4	4	0	16.2	15	5	17	23	.246
Surinach, Julio	2-1	2.25	5	0	1	12.0	9	3	5	9	.220
Teheran, Julio	0-0	2.38	4	4	0	22.2	23	10	3	16	.271

**GULF COAST****8-6****GULF COAST LEAGUE**
ROOKIE**CHAMPION STADIUM AT DISNEY**
(407) 939-2301

BATTER	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB
Bethancourt, Christian (C)	.270	10	37	8	10	3	0	1	5	3	10	1
Blanco, Elys (2B)	.227	9	22	3	5	0	0	0	1	2	5	1
Contreras, Luis (OF)	.200	9	15	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	6	1
Dalton, Jakob (3B)	.346	8	26	5	9	3	0	0	2	6	4	2
De Los Santos, Fernando (SS/2B)	.292	9	24	4	7	1	0	1	2	1	5	0
Falcon, Daniel (OF)	.133	11	30	2	4	1	0	0	3	3	10	0
Feliz, Anthony (OF)	.366	12	41	9	15	5	1	1	4	1	5	0
Hanson, Jake (3B)	.182	10	22	1	4	2	0	0	2	2	9	1
Hiller, Layton (OF)	.333	12	45	4	15	7	0	2	12	1	16	0
Kramer, Matt (1B/C)	.417	7	12	5	5	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
Linger, Jim (2B)	.238	6	21	3	5	2	1	0	0	1	0	1
Lovett, Christopher (SS)	.143	7	21	4	3	1	1	1	2	4	5	0
Mejia, Ernesto (1B)	.214	10	28	3	6	1	0	1	3	3	5	0
Odreman, Alberto (1B)	.263	11	38	7	10	1	1	5	14	1	11	0
Rose, Kyle (OF)	.259	11	27	4	7	0	0	1	4	6	4	4
Weaver, Matthew (SS/2B)	.100	10	20	4	2	0	1	0	2	0	5	1

PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	BB	SO	OBA
Alvarez, Danilo	1-0	.00	3	0	1	4.0	1	0	0	4	.083
Brewer, Caleb	1-0	.00	3	1	0	9.1	3	0	6	14	.103
Escobar, Reidy	0-1	3.60	3	0	0	5.0	7	2	1	6	.333
Estevez, Wilton	0-0	.00	4	0	0	7.0	2	0	3	14	.087
Farrell, Kyle	0-0	3.24	3	1	0	8.1	4	7	4	5	.129
Hayes, Jamie	0-0	.00	3	0	2	3.0	0	0	1	1	.000
Hernandez, Moises	1-1	3.86	6	2	0	9.1	11	5	3	9	.289
Huang, Wei	0-0	4.91	3	0	0	3.2	5	2	1	3	.357
La Point, Lucas	0-1	4.50	3	1	0	6.0	8	6	4	9	.296
Lopez, Robinson	0-0	1.04	3	2	0	8.2	7	3	3	5	.226
Mora, Edigson	0-0	1.50	3	0	1	6.0	4	1	1	7	.200
Niekro, Lance	1-1	3.27	4	2	0	11.0	11	8	4	7	.262
Northcraft, Aaron	1-0	3.00	3	2	0	9.0	7	4	4	10	.219
Pacheco, Ronan	0-0	1.17	3	1	0	7.2	3	2	2	9	.107
Perez, Carlos	0-1	2.25	3	2	0	8.0	8	5	3	7	.276
Wilson, Andrew	2-0	.00	3	0	0	5.2	2	0	1	7	.105

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45

attending college at Florida Atlantic prior to transferring to Nova Southeastern, was born in South Africa and was on the country's provisional roster this spring. He had five home runs with Danville through July 12 to rank among the Appalachian League leaders...

Spanjer-Furstenburg and **Adam Milligan** were named co-Batters of the Week in the Appalachian League for June 19-28. **Brett Oberholtzer**, an eighth-round draft pick in 2008, earned Pitcher of the Week recognition for June 29-July 5 after allowing one earned run in 11 innings over two starts. In his next outing, on July 9 against Bluefield, Oberholtzer surrendered four hits over seven shutout innings to earn his first victory. The lefthander gave up only two earned runs in his first 22 innings this season...

Catcher **Daniel Elorriaga-Matra** is making would-be base stealers think twice. A 26th-round draft pick in 2007, he has thrown out 10 of 19 runners attempting to steal, good for an impressive .526 success rate...

Paul Runge won his 200th career game as manager of the D-Braves in the second game of the season. Currently in his sixth season in the Danville dugout, Runge ranks fourth all-time on the Appalachian League wins list...

Shortstop **Mycal Jones** turned an assist-ed triple play in the D-Braves' home opener, on June 29. Jones caught a line drive with runners headed toward second and third, outran the runner to second for a force out and threw to first base for the third out. Jones is the second D-Brave to turn a triple play. Rafael Furcal accomplished the feat as a second baseman in 1998...

Danville received outfielder **David Berres** and infielder **Randy Gress**, both members of the 2008 D-Braves, on June 29. Berres, who played six games this year with Rome, decided to retire instead of reporting.

**GULF COAST**
ROOKIE

Catcher **Christian Bethancourt**, one of the top international players of 2008, has looked strong during his debut in the United States. Bethancourt has lived up to his reputation as a solid defensive catcher and has 12 hits in his first 12 games... Rightfielder **Anthony Feliz** had a pair of 4-hit games over a three-day span, from July 6-8. The Dominican product is in his second season in the GCL and was the Braves' top hitter

during the first three weeks of the season...

Leftfielder **Layton Hiller** had back-to-back 4-RBI games on July 7-8. Hiller, the Braves' 15th-round draft pick in 2008 who hit safely in nine of his first 12 games, went 4-for-5 with two doubles against the Blue Jays in the latter game...

Pitcher **Andrew Wilson**, a 36th-round draft pick in June out of Liberty University, earned wins in back-to-back relief outings on July 6-7. Wilson gave up no runs and two hits over three appearances (5 2/3 innings) out of the bullpen.

**ORGANIZATIONAL**

Through July 12, the Braves had signed 20 of their 49 picks from the 2009 draft, including 18 of its initial 23 selections, although only two of the first five (third-round shortstop **Mycal Jones** and fourth-round righthander **Thomas Berryhill**). The deadline for signing players is Aug. 17 (excluding college seniors)...

The Braves released catcher **Craig Maddox** and pitcher **Steve Evarts**. The left-handed Evarts was Atlanta's supplemental first-round draft pick in 2006.

MLB

TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR FOR TICKET INFORMATION,
CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

INDIVIDUAL GAME TICKETS

Single game tickets are available at braves.com/tickets, the Braves box office at Turner Field, by calling 1-800-326-4000, and at all TicketMaster outlets.

LOCATION	PRICE	PREMIUM#	SEASON+
Skyline@	\$1	\$1	NA
Upper Pavilion	\$6	\$6	\$3
Upper Reserved	\$8	\$12	NA
Upper Box	\$12	\$16	\$10
Field/Terrace Pavilion	\$22	\$26	\$12
Terrace Reserved	\$24	\$28	\$22
Field Reserved	\$26	\$30	\$24
Club Pavilion	\$28	\$32	\$26
Terrace Level	\$36	\$40	\$30
Field Level	\$36	\$40	\$30
Club Level	\$38	\$42	\$34
Dugout Level	\$60	\$64	\$52
Henry Aaron Seats	\$70	\$74	\$60

All Friday and Saturday regular season games.

+ Season ticket price per game.

@ Available 3 hours before game at Turner Field box office.

4-GAME PACKS

Club \$148 (4 games)
Terrace \$140 (4 games)
Field \$140 (4 games)
Outfield \$84 (4 games)
Upper Box \$44 (4 games)

FRIDAY FIREWORKS

July 31 vs. Dodgers, Aug. 4 vs. Phillies, Sept. 18 vs. Phillies,
Oct. 2 vs. Nationals

SATURDAY PACKAGE

Aug. 1 vs. Dodgers, Aug. 22 vs. Marlins, Sept. 19 vs. Phillies,
Oct. 3 vs. Nationals

NL EAST PACKAGE

Aug. 15 vs. Phillies, Aug. 21 vs. Marlins, Sept. 17 vs. Mets,
Oct. 4 vs. Nationals

GWINNETT BRAVES PACKAGE

Aug. 2 Dodgers vs. Atlanta \$13 (Field Reserved)
Aug. 22 Charlotte vs. Gwinnett \$9 (Field Box)
Sept. 6 Charlotte vs. Gwinnett \$9 (Field Box)
Sept. 20 Phillies vs. Atlanta \$13 (Field Reserved)

GROUP TICKETS

Per ticket discounts are available to groups of 20 or more.
Call (404) 577-9100 for information.

FLEX PLANS

Priced as low as \$99 (9 games/upper box location). Pick as few as 9 games and save up to \$6 per ticket.
Exchange tickets up to 24 hours prior to start of any game in your plan.

Location	Regular/Premium	Flex Price
Golden Moon Casino	\$38/\$42	\$37
Terrace	\$36/\$40	\$35
Field Level	\$36/\$40	\$35
Field/Terrace Pavilion	\$22/\$26	\$21
Upper Box	\$12/\$16	\$11

HALL OF FAME PACK

(Game Of Your Choice)

As Low As \$26 - 47 Percent Off Retail Price

One Outfield Pavilion Ticket

One Braves Replica Cap

One Braves Museum Admission Ticket

PRORATED PACKAGES

Season Tickets and Weekend Season Tickets

Call (404) 577-9100 To Inquire About Prorated
Pricing, Including The \$5 Upper Box Special.

TICKET SPECIALS

- * \$1 Skyline Seats – Available three hours before every game at the Turner Field Box Office.
- * Chevron Family Value Plan – 4 tickets, 4 hotdogs, 4 Cokes, a Braves yearbook, a parking pass and a \$5 gas card for as low as \$59 (37 percent savings), available Sunday through Thursday (Friday/Saturday games are an extra \$20 per pack; seats are Upper Box; upgrade available for additional charge).
- * Coca-Cola Two-For-One Tuesdays – Two Upper Reserved tickets for the price of one every Tuesday.
- * Two-For-One Wednesdays – Two Field/Terrace Pavilion tickets for the price of one every Wednesday.
- * ampm All You Can Eat Seats – For as low as \$45, enjoy all the peanuts and crackerjacks, hotdogs, hamburgers, sodas, and more, for one low all-inclusive price.
- * College, Military, and AAA Discount – Two Upper Box tickets for the price of one with a valid college or military ID or valid AAA member card (excluding June 23-28).
- * Ultimate Kids Days – Tickets for all fans 14 and under are \$5 on Sunday, Aug. 2. Young fans can also participate in pre-game parades around the field and be eligible to win several special experiences, including serving at the team's Honorary Team Captain or Guest Public Address Announcer.
- * Publix Friday Night Fireworks (every Friday home game).
- * All-Star Sundays (every Sunday home game): Kids run the bases, and Braves alumni autograph signings.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU

The Braves are offering all fans a birthday present – a free ticket to a game at Turner Field. Fans can go to braves.com/birthday to register for their free ticket to a game. See the following chart for the month in which you qualify for a ticket.

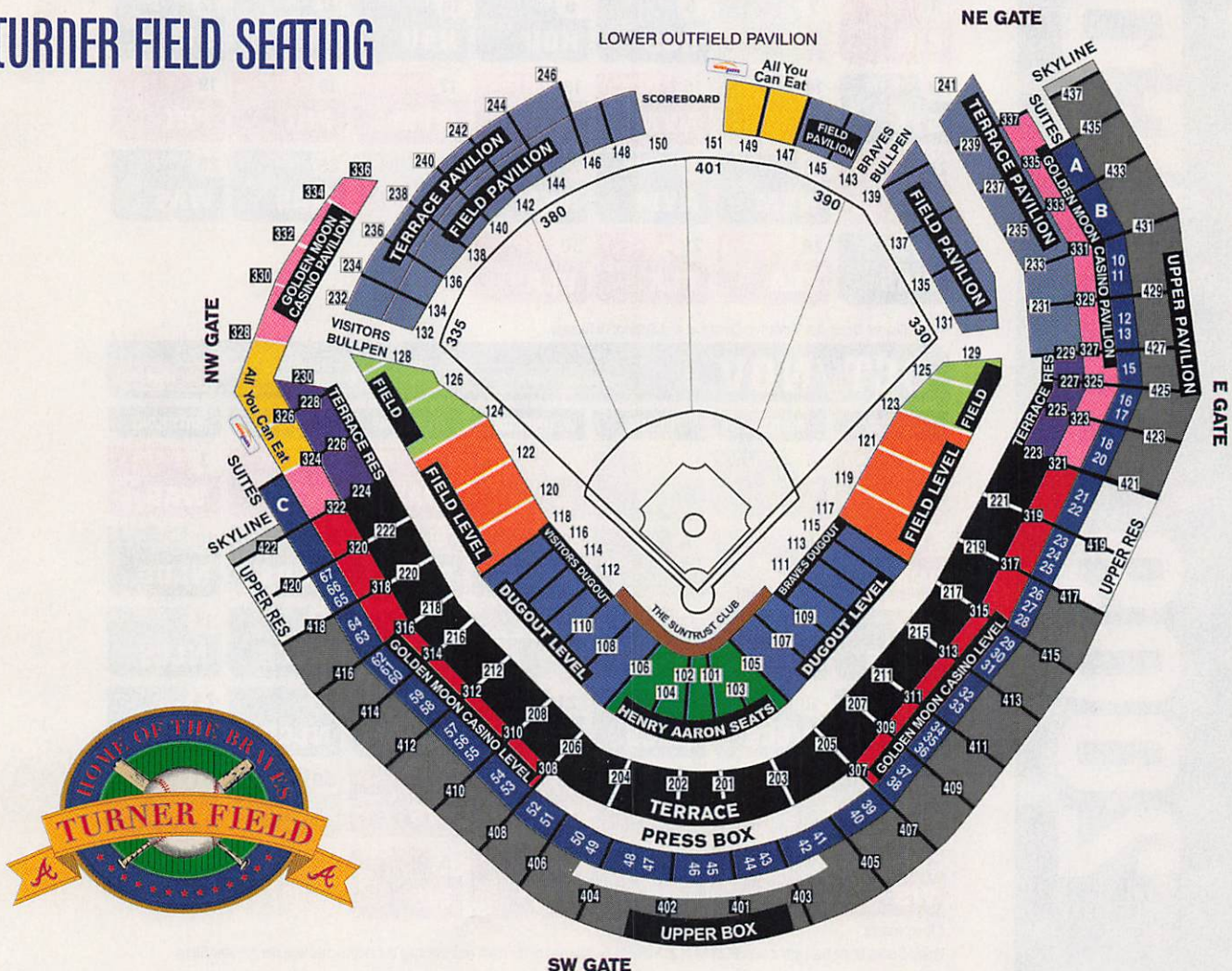
BIRTH MONTH

April or October
May or November
June or December
July or January
August or February
September or March

FREE TICKET

April, May, October
May
June
July
August
September

TURNER FIELD SEATING



2009 SCHEDULE

FS SOUTH

FSS

Peachtree TV

PTV

SPORTSOUTH

SPSO

ALL GAMES ON WGST-AM (840),
96.1-FM, AND BRAVES
RADIO NETWORK AFFILIATES

JULY/AUGUST



HOME

AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26 2:00 PM MIL FSS	27	28 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	29 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	30 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	31 7:30 PM LA PTV	1 4:00 PM LA FOX
2 1:30 PM LA FSS	3 10:00 PM SD SPSO	4 10:00 PM SD SPSO	5 3:30 PM SD SPSO	6 10:00 PM LA SPSO	7 10:00 PM LA SPSO	8 10:00 PM LA SPSO
9 4:00 PM LA FSS	10	11 7:00 PM WAS PTV	12 7:00 PM WAS SPSO	13	14 7:30 PM PHI PTV	15 4:00 PM PHI FOX
16 1:30 PM PHI FSS	17 4:00 PM ARI FSS	18 7:00 PM NYM SPSO	19 7:00 PM NYM SPSO	20 7:00 PM NYM SPSO	21 7:30 PM FLA PTV	22 7:00 PM FLA PTV
23 1:30 PM FLA FSS	24	25 7:00 PM SD SPSO	26 7:00 PM SD SPSO	27 7:00 PM SD SPSO	28 7:00 PM PHI SPSO	29 7:00 PM PHI SPSO
30 1:30 PM PHI FSS	31 7:00 PM FLA SPSO					

SEPTEMBER



HOME

AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	2 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	3 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	4 7:30 PM CIN SPSO	5 7:00 PM CIN SPSO
6 1:30 PM CIN FSS	7	8 8:00 PM HOU SPSO	9 8:00 PM HOU SPSO	10 8:00 PM HOU SPSO	11 8:00 PM STL SPSO	12 4:00 PM STL FOX
13 2:00 PM STL FSS	14	15 7:00 PM NYM PTV	16 7:00 PM NYM PTV	17 7:00 PM NYM SPSO	18 7:30 PM PHI PTV	19 7:00 PM PHI PTV
20 1:30 PM PHI FSS	21 7:00 PM NYM SPSO	22 7:00 PM NYM SPSO	23 7:00 PM NYM	24	25 7:00 PM WAS SPSO	26 1:00 PM WAS SPSO
27 1:30 PM WAS FSS	28 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	29 7:00 PM FLA SPSO	30 7:00 PM FLA SPSO			

Post-Season Dates Are Tentative, Unofficial and Subject To Change.

OCT./NOV.

National League Division Series

National League Championship Series

World Series

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 7:00 PM WAS SPSO	2 7:30 PM WAS SPSO	3 7:00 PM WAS SPSO
4 1:30 PM WAS FSS	5	6	7 NLDS	8 NLDS	9 NLDS	10 NLDS
11 NLDS	12 NLDS	13 NLCS	14	15 NLCS	16 NLCS	17 NLCS
18 NLCS	19 NLCS	20 NLCS	21 NLCS	22 NLCS	23 NLCS	24 NLCS
25	26	27	28 WS FOX	29 WS FOX	30	31 WS FOX
1 WS FOX	2 WS* FOX	3	4 WS* FOX	5 WS* FOX		

* If necessary

World Series home field advantage (Games 1, 2, 6 and 7) is awarded to the team representing the league that won the All-Star Game.

INDIVIDUAL STATS

THROUGH 7/15/09

	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SO	SB	CS	OBP	SLG	E
BATTERS																	
CONRAD	.355	10	31	5	11	1	2	2	8	22	1	6	0	0	.375	.710	0
RIGHT	.400		5		2	0	0	1	2	5	0	1			.400	.1000	
LEFT	.346		26		9	1	2	1	6	17	1	5			.370	.654	
INFANTE	.349	29	86	13	30	4	0	1	11	37	6	7	1	0	.389	.430	2
PRADO	.330	63	188	27	62	19	0	4	18	93	20	18	0	1	.394	.495	4
DIAZ	.301	60	156	26	47	9	2	4	22	72	16	36	4	0	.375	.462	1
McCANN	.298	69	238	27	71	19	1	8	37	116	28	34	3	1	.375	.487	5
ESCOBAR	.293	73	283	41	83	17	1	1	44	123	22	32	3	1	.355	.435	11
JONES	.290	77	259	42	75	15	2	9	41	121	55	37	1	1	.411	.467	13
RIGHT	.306		85		26	7	1	5	23	50	14	14			.396	.588	
LEFT	.282		174		49	8	1	4	18	71	41	23			.417	.408	
ROSS	.278	31	90	14	25	5	0	6	15	48	14	28	0	0	.375	.533	0
KOTCHMAN	.274	73	248	21	68	18	0	4	31	98	26	24	0	0	.346	.395	0
CHURCH	.274	69	241	28	66	16	0	2	23	88	17	37	6	2	.324	.365	1
ATL	.111	2	9	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	.111	.111	0
ANDERSON	.272	67	232	19	63	14	0	5	32	92	13	33	1	0	.304	.397	0
MCLOUTH	.270	76	300	51	81	18	2	14	49	145	33	54	11	1	.349	.483	0
ATL	.288	31	132	24	38	11	1	5	15	66	12	25	4	1	.349	.500	0
JOHNSON	.214	68	234	33	50	15	2	5	20	84	21	40	4	2	.286	.359	6
HERNANDEZ	.149	24	67	5	10	3	0	1	5	16	4	15	0	0	.197	.239	1
NORTON	.095	49	42	2	4	2	0	0	3	6	9	10	0	0	.269	.143	0
RIGHT	.200		10		2	1	0	0	1	3	1	3			.273	.300	
LEFT	.063		32		2	1	0	0	2	3	8	7			.268	.094	
ATLANTA	.261	88	3,009	373	785	176	14	68	356	1,193	307	531	30	10	.332	.396	57
OPPONENTS	.252	88	2,967	379	749	164	27	62	365	1,153	311	652	55	30	.328	.389	45

PINCH-HITTERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) Jones (.500-2-0-2), Escobar (.500-1-0-1), Prado (.444-4-0-3), Infante (.400-2-0-1), Johnson (.400-2-0-1), Diaz (.333-4-0-0), McCann (.333-2-0-1), Conrad (.333-1-1-3), Church (.333-2-0-0), Anderson (.200-2-1-4), Norton (.118-4-0-3), Hernandez (.000-0-0-0), Ross (.000-0-0-0), Kawakami (.000-0-0-0), Kotchman (.000-0-0-0), TEAM (.248-26-2-19).

PITCHERS (AVG-H-HR-RBI) Jurrjens (.189-7-0-4), Lowe (.179-5-0-1), Kawakami (.120-3-0-0), Vazquez (.059-2-0-2), Acosta (.000-0-0-0), Bennett (.000-0-0-0), Carlyle (.000-0-0-0), Moylan (.000-0-0-0), Medlen (.000-00-0), STAFF (.121-17-0-7)

KEY

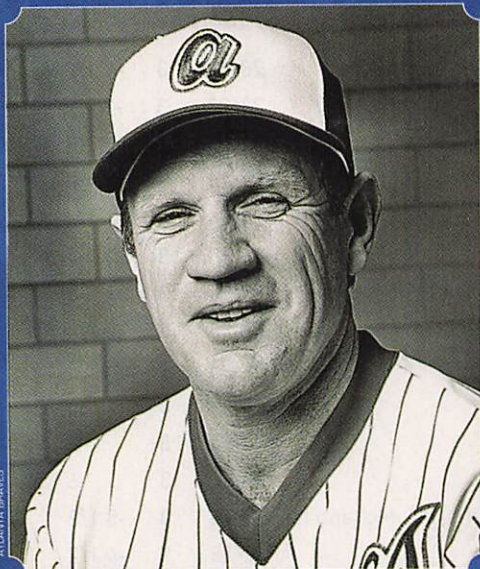
AVG-Batting average, SLG-Slugging percentage, OBP-On-base percentage, G-Games, AB-At-bats, R-Runs, H-Hits, 2B-Doubles, 3B-Triples, HR-Home runs, RBI-Runs batted in, TB-Total bases, BB-Walks, SO-Strikeouts, SB-Stolen bases, CS-Caught stealing, E-Errors, W-L-Wins-Losses, ERA-Earned run average, GS-Starts, GF-Games finished, SV-Saves, IP-Innings pitched, HB-Hit batters, WP-Wild pitches, OBA-Opponents' batting average.

	W-L	ERA	G	GS	GF	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HR	HB	BB	SO	WP	OBA
PITCHERS																
SORIANO	1-1	1.48	41	0	20	12	42.2	23	7	7	1	1	15	58	0	.158
LOGAN	1-0	2.57	6	0	0	0	7	4	2	2	0	0	5	1	0	.174
JURRJENS	7-7	2.91	19	19	0	0	114.1	101	43	37	8	2	44	78	2	.243
VAZQUEZ	6-7	2.95	18	18	0	0	119	102	42	39	10	2	23	136	3	.229
BENNETT	2-4	3.18	33	0	8	0	34	42	13	12	2	3	21	23	1	.316
ACOSTA	0-0	3.32	17	0	10	0	19	19	8	7	2	0	8	14	1	.253
O'FLAHERTY	1-1	3.34	47	0	4	0	32.1	29	14	12	1	4	8	22	1	.236
GONZALEZ	3-2	3.43	45	0	23	9	42	35	21	16	4	5	18	55	2	.229
CAMPILLO	1-0	4.15	5	0	4	0	4.1	7	3	2	0	0	3	3	0	.389
KAWAKAMI	5-6	4.26	16	16	0	0	88.2	84	48	42	10	5	36	68	6	.252
LOWE	8-7	4.39	19	19	0	0	112.2	121	59	55	6	3	37	61	3	.276
MOYLAN	2-2	4.62	49	0	3	0	37	37	22	19	0	2	21	28	1	.272
MEDLEN	2-3	5.85	11	4	3	0	32.1	32	21	21	4	2	20	33	2	.267
CARLYLE	0-1	8.84	14	0	6	0	19.1	31	21	19	4	0	11	12	2	.369
VALDEZ	0-1	13.50	1	0	1	0	0.2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	.500
ATLANTA	43-45	3.88	88	88	87	21	788.2	749	379	340	62	34	311	652	24	.252
OPPONENTS	45-43	3.81	88	88	85	23	792	785	373	335	68	25	307	531	18	.261

BY GAME

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC	POS	GB
1	4/5	PHI	A	W	4-1	Lowe (1-0)	McCann (1), Francoeur (1), Schafer (1)	1-0	1	+1/2
2	4/7	PHI	A	W	4-0	Jurrjens (1-0)	Johnson (1), Jones (1)	2-0	T-1	—
3	4/8	PHI	A	L	11-12	Boyer (0-1)	McCann (2), Schafer (2), Diaz (1)	2-1	3	-1
4	4/10	WAS	H	W	6-5 (10)	Campillo (1-0)	Escobar (1)	3-1	2	-1
5	4/11	WAS	H	W	5-3	Kawakami (1-0)	Johnson (2)	4-1	T-1	—
6	4/12	WAS	H	W	8-5	Jurrjens (2-0)	—	5-1	T-1	—
7	4/14	FLA	H	L	1-5	Vazquez (0-1)	Johnson (3)	5-2	2	-1
8	4/15	FLA	H	L	4-10	Moylan (0-1)	--	5-3	2	-2
9	4/16	FLA	H	L	2-6	Kawakami (1-1)	--	5-4	2	-3
10	4/17	PIT	A	L	0-3	Jurrjens (2-1)	--	5-5	T-2	-4
11	4/18	PIT	A	L	0-10	Reyes (0-1)	--	5-6	3	-5
12	4/19	PIT	A	W	11-1	Vazquez (1-1)	Prado (1), Ross (1)	6-6	T-2	-5
13	4/20	WAS	A	L	2-3	Lowe (1-1)	Diaz (2)	6-7	3	-5
14	4/21	WAS	A	L	3-4	Kawakami (1-2)	--	6-8	4	-5
15	4/22	WAS	A	W	1-0	Gonzalez (1-0)	--	7-8	2	-4
16	4/24	CIN	A	W	4-3	Vazquez (2-1)	Francoeur (2)	8-8	2	-3
17	4/25	CIN	A	W	10-2	Lowe (2-1)	Jones (2), Escobar (2)	9-8	2	-2
18	4/26	CIN	A	L	2-8	Kawakami (1-3)	Ross (2)	9-9	3	-2
19	4/27	STL	H	L	2-3	Jurrjens (2-2)	--	9-10	T-3	-2
20	4/28	STL	H	W	2-1	Moylan (1-1)	--	10-10	3	-2
21	4/29	STL	H	L	3-5	Vazquez (2-2)	--	10-11	3	-3
22	5/1	HOU	H	W	7-2	Lowe (3-1)	Francoeur (3)	11-11	3	-2 1/2
23	5/2	HOU	H	L	1-5	Carlyle (0-1)	--	11-12	3	-2 1/2
24	5/3	HOU	H	L	5-7	Moylan (1-2)	--	11-13	3	-2 1/2
25	5/4	NYM	H	L	4-6	Vazquez (2-3)	Jones (3)	11-14	4	-3 1/2
26	5/5	NYM	H	L	3-4	Kawakami (1-4)	--	11-15	4	-4
27	5/6	FLA	A	W	8-6	Lowe (4-1)	--	12-15	4	-3
28	5/7	FLA	A	W	4-2	Jurrjens (3-2)	Ross (3), Kotchman (1)	13-15	4	-2
29	5/8	PHI	A	L	6-10	Reyes (0-2)	Infante (1), Kotchman (2)	13-16	4	-3
30	5/9	PHI	A	W	6-2	Vazquez (3-3)	Escobar (3), McCann (3)	14-16	4	-2 1/2
31	5/10	PHI	A	W	4-2	Kawakami (2-4)	--	15-16	4	-2 1/2
32	5/11	NYM	A	W	8-3	Lowe (5-1)	--	16-16	4	-1 1/2
33	5/12	NYM	A	L	3-4 (10)	Bennett (0-1)	--	16-17	4	-2 1/2
34	5/13	NYM	A	W	8-7 (12)	Bennett (1-1)	Prado (2)	17-17	4	-1 1/2
35	5/15	ARZ	H	W	4-3	Gonzalez (2-0)	Jones (4)	18-17	3	-2
36	5/16	ARZ	H	L	0-12	Kawakami (2-5)	--	18-18	3	-3
37	5/18	COL	H	L	1-5	Lowe (5-2)	--	18-19	3	-2 1/2
38	5/19	COL	H	W	8-1	Jurrjens (4-2)	--	19-19	3	-2 1/2
39	5/20	COL	H	W	12-4	Vazquez (4-3)	Escobar (4)	20-19	3	-1 1/2
40	5/21	COL	H	L	0-9	Medlen (0-1)	--	20-20	3	-2 1/2
41	5/22	TOR	H	W	1-0	Kawakami (3-5)	--	21-20	3	-2 1/2
42	5/23	TOR	H	W	4-3	Lowe (6-2)	Johnson (4)	22-20	3	-1 1/2
43	5/24	TOR	H	W	10-2	Bennett (2-1)	Johnson (5), McCann 2 (5)	23-20	T-2	-1 1/2

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRs	REC	POS	GB
44	5/25	SF	A	L	2-8	Vazquez (4-4)	--	23-21	3	-1 1/2
45	5/26	SF	A	L	0-4	Medlen (0-2)	--	23-22	3	-2 1/2
46	5/27	SF	A	L	3-6	Kawakami (3-6)	--	23-23	3	-3
47	5/28	ARZ	A	L	2-5	Lowe (6-3)	--	23-24	3	-3 1/2
48	5/29	ARZ	A	W	10-6	Jurrjens (5-2)	Escobar (5)	24-24	3	-3 1/2
49	5/30	ARZ	A	L	2-3 (11)	Bennett (2-2)	--	24-25	3	-4
50	5/31	ARZ	A	W	9-3	Medlen (1-2)	Jones (5), Anderson (1)	25-25	3	-4
51	6/2	CHC	H	W	6-5 (12)	Soriano (1-0)	Anderson (2), Francoeur (4)	26-25	3	-4 1/2
52	6/3	CHC	H	L	2-3 (11)	Bennett (2-2)	--	26-26	3	-5 1/2
53	6/5	MIL	H	L	0-4	Jurrjens (5-3)	--	26-27	3	-6
54	6/6	MIL	H	L	0-3	Vazquez (4-5)	--	26-28	3	-6
55	6/7	MIL	H	W	8-7	O'Flaherty (1-0)	Jones 2 (7)	27-28	3	-6
56	6/8	PIT	H	W	7-6 (15)	Medlen (2-2)	Jones (8), McLouth (10), McCann (6)	28-28	3	-5 1/2
57	6/9	PIT	H	W	4-3	Lowe (7-3)	--	29-28	3	-4 1/2
58	6/10	PIT	H	L	2-3	Jurrjens (5-4)	Anderson (3)	29-29	3	-5 1/2
59	6/11	PIT	H	L	1-3	Soriano 1-1	--	29-30	3	-6 1/2
60	6/12	BAL	A	W	7-2	Hansen (1-0)	Escobar (6), Prado (3)	30-30	3	-5 1/2
61	6/13	BAL	A	L	4-8	O'Flaherty (1-1)	--	30-31	3	-5 1/2
62	6/14	BAL	A	L	2-11	Lowe (7-4)	Ross 2 (5)	30-32	4	-6 1/2
63	6/16	CIN	A	L	2-7	Jurrjens (5-5)	--	30-33	4	-6 1/2
64	6/17	CIN	A	L	3-4	Vazquez (4-6)	Escobar (7)	30-34	4	-6 1/2
65	6/18	CIN	A	W	7-0	Hanson (2-0)	Diaz (3), McLouth (11)	31-34	4	-5 1/2
66	6/19	BOS	A	W	8-2	Kawakami (4-6)	McLouth (12)	32-34	3	-4 1/2
67	6/20	BOS	A	L	0-3	Lowe (7-5)	--	32-35	4	-4 1/2
68	6/21	BOS	A	L	5-6	Bennett (2-4)	--	32-36	4	-4 1/2
69	6/22	CHC	H	W	2-0	Vazquez (5-6)	--	33-36	4	-4
70	6/23	NYN	H	W	4-0	Hanson (3-0)	McCann (7)	34-36	4	-4
71	6/24	NYN	H	L	4-8	Medlen (2-3)	Francoeur (5)	34-37	4	-4
72	6/25	NYN	H	L	7-11	Lowe (7-6)	McCann (8)	34-38	4	-4
73	6/26	BOS	H	L	1-4	Jurrjens (5-6)	Ross (6)	34-39	4	-4
74	6/27	BOS	H	L	0-1	Vazquez (5-7)	--	34-40	4	-5
75	6/28	BOS	H	W	2-1	Hanson (4-0)	Jones (9), Anderson (4)	35-40	4	-5
76	6/30	PHI	H	W	5-4 (10)	Moylan (2-2)	Prado (4)	36-40	4	-4
77	7/1	PHI	H	W	11-1	Jurrjens (6-6)	Diaz (4), Hernandez (1)	37-40	4	-3
78	7/2	PHI	H	W	5-2	Gonzalez (3-0)	Kotchman (3), Anderson (5)	38-40	4	-2
79	7/3	WAS	A	W	9-8	Logan (1-0)	Conrad (1)	39-40	T-3	-2
80	7/4	WAS	A	L	3-5	Gonzalez (3-1)	--	39-41	T-3	-3
81	7/5	WAS	A	L	3-5	Lowe (7-7)	McLouth (13)	39-42	T-3	-4
82	7/6	CHC	A	L	2-4	Jurrjens (6-7)	McLouth (14)	39-43	4	-5
83	7/7	CHC	A	W	2-1	Vazquez (6-7)	--	40-43	3	-4
84	7/8	CHC	A	W	4-1	Kawakami (5-6)	Kotchman (4)	41-43	3	-4
85	7/9	COL	A	L	6-7	Gonzalez (3-2)	--	41-44	3	-5
86	7/10	COL	A	W	4-1	Lowe (8-7)	--	42-44	3	-5
87	7/11	COL	A	W	4-3	Jurrjens (7-7)	--	43-44	3	-5
88	7/12	COL	A	L	7-8	Valdez (0-1)	Conrad(2)	43-45	3	-6



ATLANTA BRAVES



Dave Bristol, who managed the Braves in 1976-77 and enjoyed a long career as a manager and coach in other organizations, now helps coach at Murphy (N.C.) High School where his son, Lance (#23), is the head coach.

CONSUMMATE COACH

At 76, Dave Bristol's Working With Son's High School Team As Well As With Three Colleges

BY BRIAN KNAPP

Dave Bristol needs only to look at the man by his side for assurances about his coaching legacy. His 40-year-old son, Lance, chose to follow in his father's footsteps three years ago.

The former Braves manager (1976-77) currently serves as his son's right-hand assistant at Murphy High School in Murphy, N.C. Lance, now 40, led the Bulldogs to a 15-7 record and the fourth round of their state tournament – the school's deepest run in 20 years – in 2009, and to their first Smoky Mountain Conference championship in nearly three decades.

Dave, the deepest of resource reservoirs, stood by him every step of the way. His presence on the bench has done more than add experience, wisdom and know-how to the Murphy High School dugout. It has allowed a son to reconnect with his father, who spent many of his formative years preoccupied and away from home.

"To have him here, I'm the luckiest guy in the world," Lance said. "I traveled with him from the time I was 6 until I was 23, but I never talked much with him. It's been the best thing for our relationship."

A 2006 inductee into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame, Dave likes hanging around the ballpark and passing on his knowledge to a younger generation of players, many of who have no idea what he accomplished – or who he coached – during his career in professional baseball.

"I try to help out the kids," Dave said. "They've been very receptive. I enjoy the teaching part. I can impart a little of my experience. I couldn't have been received better."

At an age [76] when many of his contemporaries have left the game behind, he surprises his son with his preparation, commit-

ment and attention to detail.

"My assistant coaches and I talk about it all the time," Lance said. "I notice two or three things going on at one time. He sees 15 things at one time."

Lance, who has compiled a 44-20 mark in three years as head coach of the Bulldogs, admits he's learned a number of valuable lessons from his father.

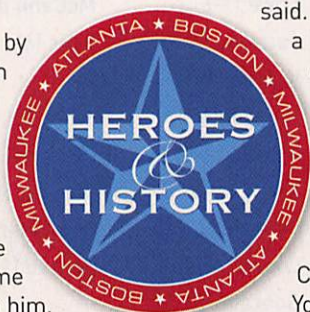
"He respects the game more than anybody I've ever seen," he said. "He taught me early that you wear that uniform like a badge of honor. You play the game right, hustle on and off the field, and never show anybody up. That means more to me than anything."

Considering his age, no one would blame Dave if his contributions to the game ended there. They do not. He also serves as an advisor to the baseball coaches at the University of Tennessee, Young Harris College, and his alma mater, Western Carolina University.

Young Harris head coach Rick Robinson raves about Bristol's impact on his program. During the spring, Bristol makes the 40-mile round trip to Young Harris, Ga., to hold court at practice almost every day.

"He's the most positive person I've ever been around," Robinson said. "He's like my roving instructor. I'm on one side of the field, and he's on the other. We work really well together. It's unbelievable having him at practices. There are days when I leave to go home for dinner, and Dave Bristol is still out on the field coaching somebody."

The activity keeps Bristol young and sharp. Outside of baseball, he remains a small-town man at heart. He resides with his



wife of 57 years, Betty, in Andrews, N.C., where he raises livestock on his two farms.

"I've still got my horses and cattle," Bristol said. "I've lived in Andrews since 1973. I have two farms, one 25 acres, one 20 acres."

On the surface, Bristol's professional coaching and managerial career looks less than spectacular. However, he worked with some of the game's greatest players: Pete Rose, Tony Perez and Johnny Bench in Cincinnati, Phil Niekro in Atlanta, and Willie McCovey in San Francisco. Bristol compiled a 657-764 mark in 11 years at the helm with the Reds, Brewers (who actually were the Seattle Pilots when he was hired but relocated during spring training), Braves and Giants.

Additionally, he was a third base coach for Cincinnati (1966, '89, '93), Montreal (1973-75), San Francisco (1978-79) and Philadelphia (1982-85, '88).

He managed the Braves to a 70-92 record in 1976, 60-100 in 1977.

"I was highly disappointed because we couldn't put a winning team on the field [in Atlanta]," said Bristol, a native of Macon, Ga. "I was so tickled when I got the job. I got to come back to the South. It didn't play out the way I wanted it to. That was frustrating."

His stay in Atlanta was marred by owner Ted Turner's infamous one-day managing escapade in 1977, when he sent Bristol on a "scouting trip" and took over the team. Scolded by baseball officials and informed that managers were not allowed to hold a financial stake in their teams, Turner phoned Bristol and offered him the job again a day later. Bristol accepted.

"I told him in Pittsburgh that day that he couldn't do that," Bristol said, a dry chuckle trailing close behind. "He was different from anybody in baseball I'd ever worked for."

Bristol's decision to return to work was made without reservation.

"I loved baseball, and I thought it was the right thing to do," he said.

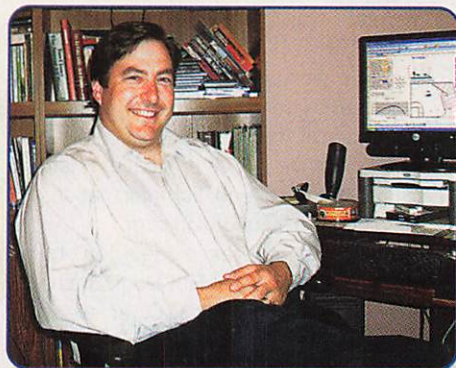
An infielder, Bristol never played in the majors, but became a player/manager at age 24 in the Cincinnati farm system, where he won five league championships in nine seasons. That prepared him for a jump to the majors as a Reds coach in 1966 and then to the manager's job in mid-season. He was just 33 years old - the youngest manager in the majors. He was fired after finishing third in 1969, the highest of his 11-year managerial career, and was replaced by Sparky Anderson, who inherited a team that was close to becoming the famed Big Red Machine.

Bristol retired from professional coaching in 1993 after a stint as Cincinnati's third base coach.

HOW WEATHER IMPACTS HOME RUNS

WHEN A BRAVES hitter connects, sometimes there's no doubt that the ball will clear the fence. On other occasions, it needs some help from the weather conditions.

Greg Rybarczyk (R) reveals the science behind every home run hit in the major leagues at his website hittrackeronline.com. It shows how far each ball traveled, and how weather conditions affected its flight.



"What really matters the most

is the air that the ball is flying through - the density of air and the way the air is moving," said Rybarczyk, a reliability engineer who uses the term "atmospherics" to describe the forces that act upon the baseball.

Among all factors, wind has the most significant impact on long flyballs.

"If a typical home run gets hit with a 10 miles per hour tailwind, it can pick up around 25 feet of distance," said Rybarczyk. "That's enough to easily blow it over the warning track. A typical warning track is 18-20 feet wide. So, it's a significant effect. If the wind is blowing in your face at 10 miles per hour, it will take off probably a little bit less than that - 20-25 feet."

Turner Field rarely sees strong winds during the baseball season, but it gets more than its share of hot, humid conditions.

"The temperature has its own impact, because warmer air is less dense, and that provides less resistance to the ball as it's flying through the air," said Rybarczyk, whose website also tracks the speed and trajectory of each homer. "So, on a warmer day, you will see the ball carry further than it would on a colder day. Typical rule of thumb there is for every 10 degrees of temperature, you pick up about four feet of distance on a home run length flyball. So, if you take a cold day in Cleveland in April where it's 40-45 degrees, and compare that with a typical steamy night in Atlanta where it's 90, you could see a difference of 16-20 feet of flight on the same batted ball."

Atlanta's humidity helps home runs, although the effect is minor. While people may describe humid days as having "heavy air," just the opposite holds true.

"The main constituents in air are nitrogen and hydrogen," said Rybarczyk. "Those molecules are heavier than water molecules. When the air is humid, that means that there is more water vapor in the air than usual, and that displaces a little bit of the hydrogen and nitrogen. Long story short, the air is a little less dense."

Altitude also impacts home runs, which is a key factor in Atlanta. Turner Field lies at 1,057 feet above sea level, making it the major league's third-highest park behind Coors Field (Colorado) and Chase Field (Arizona). Rybarczyk noted that this adds four to five feet to a home run length flyball.

"One of the things that I've found is that around 30 percent of all home runs clear the fence by 10 feet or less," said Rybarczyk. "If you think about it, if you're going to have the altitude adding about five feet of flight to your ball, that's maybe a 15 percent increase in home runs right there."

Rybarczyk finds that powerful hitters like Chipper Jones tend to get their home runs regardless of conditions.

"In the favorable wind conditions or the favorable weather, everybody's hitting home runs," he said. "But when it gets a little tougher, then the sluggers are the ones that can still do it."

ALUMNI NOTES



Phil Niekro (RHP, 1964-83, '87) was among the baseball greats scheduled to appear at Houston's Minute Maid Park July 31 for the inaugural Knuckle Ball...A Pitch for Life to honor the memory of his late brother, **Joe Niekro** (RHP, 1973-74), and to raise funds to benefit aneurysm research and treatment at The Methodist Hospital Neurological Institute in Houston. The black-tie event will be emceed by Hall of Famer Joe Morgan. For information, go to joeniekrofoundation.com.

Niekro also was scheduled to appear at the annual Hot Dog Lunch, July 18, in Washington, D.C., an event on Capitol Hill sponsored by the American Meat Institute.

News reports quoted **Tom Glavine** (LHP, 1987-2002, '08) as saying he would not attend the Braves events honoring **Greg Maddux** (RHP, 1993-2003) July 17 due to family obligations. Glavine said he would tape a video message to be played at the ceremonies. Glavine hasn't officially said he's "retired," but he has been quoted as saying he's out of baseball in any capacity for the rest of this season.

This year's class of the International League Hall of Fame includes **Red Schoendienst** (2B, 1957-60), as well as **Red Barrett** (RHP, 1943-45, '47-49). Schoendienst, a key member of the 1957 World Champion Milwaukee Braves, was the 1943 IL Most Valuable Player.

John Smoltz (RHP, 1988-99, 2001-08) made his Boston Red Sox debut June 25. Smoltz gave up five runs on seven hits in five innings against Washington and was charged with the 9-3 loss. The Braves played their 72nd game of the season on the same date.

Washington traded **Ryan Langerhans** (OF, 2002, '05-07) to Seattle for minor league infielder Mike Morse.

David Justice (OF/1B, 1989-96), who lives in San Diego, offered his services for free to the Padres to mentor

players and throw left-handed batting practice, but was turned down.

Justice was among the participants in the 20th Annual Charlie Joiner Celebrity Classic June 18-19 at the Del Mar Country Club and Maderas Gold Club.

Dale Murphy (OF/1B/C, 1976-90) is scheduled to appear and sign autographs at the Bob Feller Museum in Van Meter, Iowa, on Sept. 19. Mail-in orders for autographs are being taken. For information, visit bobfeller-museum.org. Murphy also was scheduled to appear at the Triple-A All-Star Game Fan Fest in his hometown of Portland, Oregon, July 11.

Gaylord Perry (RHP, 1981) appeared at San Francisco's AT&T Park June 20, along with Tom Seaver and Nolan Ryan, to help celebrate Randy Johnson's 300th victory. Letters from **Phil Niekro** (RHP, 1964-83, '87) and **Tom Glavine** (LHP, 1987-2002, '08) also were read during the ceremony.

George Altison, co-founder and business manager of the Boston Braves Historical Association, died June 19 at the age of 79. Altison, who grew up two blocks from Braves Field, arranged the BBHA's annual reunions and was the driving force behind the 500-plus member organization for years.

Joe Torre (C/1B, 1960-68, Mgr., 1982-84) and **Tony La Russa** (2B, 1971) were National League coaches for the All-Star Game.

Kyle Farnsworth (RHP, 2005) of the Kansas City Royals received four stitches in his left index finger after being bitten by one of his two bulldogs June 16.

The Cubs fired hitting coach **Gerald Perry** (1B/OF, 1983-89) June 14.

Just days before shooting was to begin, Columbia Pictures cancelled plans to make a movie based on the book Moneyball that was to include appearances by Tim Hudson and **David Justice** (OF/1B, 1989-96).

BIRTHDAYS

AUGUST

1 ST	FREDDY GARCIA (37)
2 ND	PAUL MARAK (44)
3 RD	SID BREAM (49)
4 TH	JOE PIGNATANO (80)
	B.J. SURHOFF (45)
5 TH	TOMMY REIS (95)
	ANDY MESSERSMITH (64)
	BOB HORNER (52)
	STAN BELINDA (43)
	KEITH MITCHELL (40)
7 TH	RAY CRONE (78)
	BRIAN KOWITZ (40)
	EDGAR RENTERIA (34)
	TYLER YATES (32)
8 TH	CLIFF SPECK (53)
	JOHN HUDEK (43)
	MATT WHITESIDE (42)
9 TH	TED SIMMONS (60)
	DEION SANDERS (42)
10 TH	GERALD WILLIAMS (43)
	JORGE CAMPILLO (31)
	JOSH ANDERSON (27)
11 TH	LUIS OLMO (90)
12 TH	DEAN HARTGRAVES (43)
	ISMAEL VILLEGAS (33)
13 TH	BOB GIGGIE (78)
	TONY CLONINGER (69)
	MARK LEMKE (44)
	ROMAN COLON (30)
	WILL OHMAN (32)
	BOONE LOGAN (25)
15 TH	JOEY JAY (74)
	JOE COWLEY (51)
16 TH	MIKE JORGENSEN (61)
17 TH	KELLY MANN (42)
	ADAM BUTLER (36)
	JEFF RIDGWAY (29)
18 TH	BRUCE BENEDICT (54)
	TERRY BLOCKER (50)
	ALBIE LOPEZ (38)
	KEVIN BARRY (31)
	JASON PERRY (29)
19 TH	LUIS GOMEZ (58)
	TERRY HARPER (54)
	NED YOST (54)
	MATT FRANCO (40)
	LANCE CORMIER (29)
20 TH	GRAIG NETTLES (65)
21 ST	FELIX MILLAN (66)
	CRAIG ROBINSON (61)
	DERRIN EBERT (33)
	JASON MARQUIS (31)
22 ND	MILT HILL (44)
	CARL SCHUTZ (38)
23 RD	JULIO FRANCO (51)
	RANDY ST. CLAIRE (49)
24 TH	EVERETT STULL (38)
	RAFAEL FURCAL (31)
25 TH	ODDIBE MCDOWELL (47)
26 TH	ALEX TREVINO (52)
	JEFF PARRETT (48)
	VICTOR ROSARIO (43)
27 TH	ANDY PRATT (30)
28 TH	TONY GONZALEZ (73)
	BOB HARTMAN (72)
	BILLY COWAN (71)
	TOMMY HANSON (23)
29 TH	DAVE COLE (79)
	DAVE NICHOLSON (70)
	DAN SCHNEIDER (67)
	HENRY BLANCO (38)
30 TH	FRANK FUNK (74)
	MIKE MCQUEEN (59)
	RANDY O'NEAL (49)
31 ST	DANNY LITWILER (93)
	BILL NAHORODNY (56)
	CLAUDELL WASHINGTON (55)
	TIM DREW (31)



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FOUR FOR OCTOBER

DON'T GIVE UP ON THIS TEAM.

I haven't. Neither have Frank Wren and Bobby Cox.

Oh, it's a very frustrating team to follow sometimes. No doubt about it. But it also can be a very compelling team to watch, as it showed by sweeping three games from the Phillies in early July.

Yes, when a team has trouble getting to .500, it's a stretch to imagine it playing in the post-season. But the point is that this team has potential to play much better - and it has time to play much better. The Phillies, Fish and Mets can be had - and you can bet they know it as well as the Braves do.

The excellent work by the starting rotation (with "sixth starter" Tim Hudson in waiting) is the best reason to believe the Braves will stay in the race all the way. Here are four reasons to think they can do *even more* than just "stay in the race."

We give you Exhibits A, B, C and D.

EXHIBIT A - RAFAEL SORIANO.

The man has latched onto the closer's job like a hungry hound on a fresh hotdog at Bark in the Park.

"I'm not sure there's a better closer in the league than Soriano right now," said Frank Wren at the All-Star break. "He's so dominant. When he's healthy, he's as close to unhittable as you can get."

Truth be known, he's been pretty darn unhittable most of his career. His stats - this year and for his career - are sensational. Check out some of them in the poster on pages 32-33.

This is the kind of closer the Braves have often lacked in the past. This is the kind of closer that can take a team to October. This is the kind of closer the Braves didn't have much of the first two months because the bullpen was still coming together, and Soriano was recovering from nerve transposition surgery. This is the kind of closer Soriano has always shown hints he could be, if only good health and the right opportunity presented itself simultaneously.

Guess what? They have. The rest of the league better take notice, or else Mr. Soriano will blow off their batting helmets.

EXHIBIT B - MARTIN PRADO.

It's such a treat to see a young player

finally get his big chance and come of age at the same time. There's never been any doubt that Prado can hit, but it took most of the first half for him to be in the right place at the right time. When that finally happened, Prado told "Opportunity" there was no reason to knock a second time. On a team searching for consistent run production, Prado has shown everyone that it doesn't have to come from a big knocker. It can come from an inspired young man who loves to play the game - and shows it.

EXHIBIT C - TOMMY HANSON.

What an impressive burst of energy he's been and will continue to be. As good as the rest of the rotation has been - and that's plenty good - Hanson may give all the other guys a run for their money by the time October rolls around. He looks that good.

EXHIBIT D - BROOKS CONRAD.

Who knows where Conrad will be by the time you read this, let alone by October. He may still be in the starting lineup, or he might fall victim to the numbers and wind up back at Gwinnett. Either way, if the Braves rally to win the division, this is another spunky player who has shown them how to do it with his energy and spirit for the game.

A three-run pinch homer in his first at-bat as a Brave was a nice introduction, but then Conrad continued to get at least one hit in each of his seven starts before the All-Star break, capped by three hits and another homer July 12.

It took him eight years to get here, and he made it obvious he intends to scratch and claw to keep a roster spot.

"If we don't watch it, the next thing you know, he'll have 50 to 60 games at second base under his belt," said Wren. "He's made an impression in a short time."

When the season began, Soriano was a setup man, Prado was a reserve, Hanson was in the minors, and Conrad wasn't even on the radar. Goes to show how things can change quickly, given the right circumstances. So, don't go away.

THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK was mailed July 22. The September issue will be mailed Aug. 20.

BEYOND BASEBALL

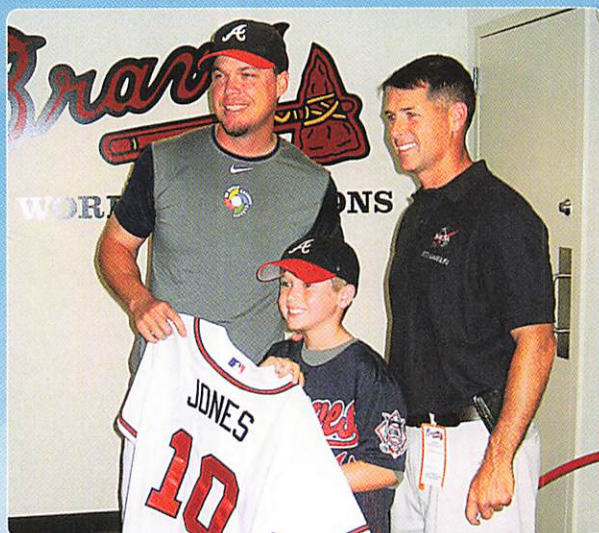
Astronaut Shane Kimbrough and his son, Zack, present Chipper Jones with the jersey Shane took into space (along with a copy of ChopTalk) in November.

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN



SPACEMAN

NASA SHUTTLE ASTRONAUT - and major Braves fan - Lt. Col. **Shane Kimbrough** and his son, **Zack**, thoroughly enjoyed their VIP visit to Turner Field on June 26. The Kimbroughs visited **Bobby Cox** in the dugout, watched batting practice at the batting cage with hitting coach **Terry Pendleton**, and presented **Frank Wren** with two photos, one of the November launch of the Shuttle Endeavour and another of Turner Field from space. They also toured the Braves' clubhouse and got to yell, "Play ball!" to start the game. Kimbrough also presented **Chipper Jones** with the Braves jersey he took with him on his shuttle mission to the International Space Station (ISS) in November (Jan. '09 CT). Jones was delighted with the gift and plans to frame the jersey to hang in "jersey row" in his home (see pages 6-9).



PATTY RASMUSSEN



CHIPPER JONES and former Brave **Adam LaRoche** (Pittsburgh Pirates) are members of a joint ownership group purchasing the 1,583-acre Wallahachie Ranch in western Kansas. The ranch, which comes with a lease for an additional 2,500 acres, is situated on the Kansas/Oklahoma border and will be used primarily for personal hunts, especially for tapings of new Buck Commander DVD episodes. "This place is all about us trying to get a 200-inch deer with a bow, on camera," said Jones. "There are gigantic white tail deer on it, much bigger than at the Double Dime [Chipper's ranch in Texas]." The Wallahachie Ranch is located near famed Dodge City, Kansas. Jones made a trip there during the All-Star break in order to see it and take care of some business. "There's a house near town, but we're considering putting up some type of structure on the property," he said. "It would be similar to the house the LaRoches have in Kansas." (March '06 CT)...

Hall of Fame pitcher and Braves broadcaster **Don Sutton** missed a day of work, the makeup game against the Cubs at Turner Field on June 22, for a cause that's literally close to his heart. Sutton was in New York to meet with a group of cancer advocates from the Kidney Cancer Association and representatives from two pharmaceutical companies, Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals and Onyx Pharmaceuticals, which developed and marketed Nexavar, the drug Sutton takes as part of his treatment for advanced kidney cancer. "It was an interesting day for me," said Sutton, who shared his story of living with cancer. "I live my life with kidney cancer every day. I can't change that, but how I live with it is my responsibility." Sutton, who was diagnosed seven years ago, lost a kidney to cancer in 2002 and, in 2005, lost a portion of

his lung as the cancer spread. Despite the obstacles, he continued to work and stay fit, something he attributes to excellent medical care and a willingness to face the disease with a positive attitude. He now serves as the spokesperson for Stay In the Game, a national program designed to serve as a resource and offer support for patients and families dealing with kidney cancer. Check out the Stay In the Game website at stayinggame.com...

Mike Gonzalez got a visit from his mother, **Norma Gonzalez**, and his sister, **Marissa**, June 18-27. Meanwhile, Gonzalez's other sister, **Melina**, traveled from the family's home in Houston, Tex., to Dallas in order to audition for "American Idol."...

Kelly Johnson and his wife, **Lauren**, are expecting their first child in early December...

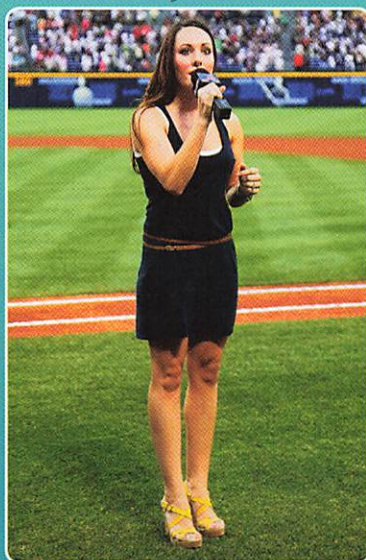
Braves radio broadcaster **Jim Powell** was finally reunited with his family - wife, **Emmy**, who stayed in Milwaukee in order for their daughters, **Allie** (13), **Sabrina** (11), and **Julia** (8) to finish the school year. The family and their four cats and three dogs relocated to a new home in the Atlanta suburb of Alpharetta. Powell took off the July 9-12 series in Colorado in order to help the family get settled in their new digs, which also allowed him to have a full week off, thanks to the All-Star break, July 13-15...

Though Boston was his favorite city to visit thus far, **Tommy Hanson** is looking forward to the first week of August when the Braves travel to his old stomping grounds, Southern California, to play the San Diego Padres and Los Angeles Dodgers. "As soon as I got called up, people [from California] started calling and saying, 'We'll see you when you get out here,'" said Hanson. "I'm going to break the

bank with all the tickets I need to leave, but it's hard to say 'no' when people have been so supportive through the years." He also said he's giving serious thought to which song he'd like to hear when he comes up to bat. "The song they're playing isn't motivating me," he said. "At least that's my excuse! I'm leaning toward something by the Kings of Leon." Hanson is well aware of rookie hazing which usually takes place during the first road trip in September. "That's one of the things I'll have to take in stride, but there should be a bunch of other dudes around, so I won't be the only one," he said. "Me being tall with long legs, I can only imagine what I'll have to wear."...

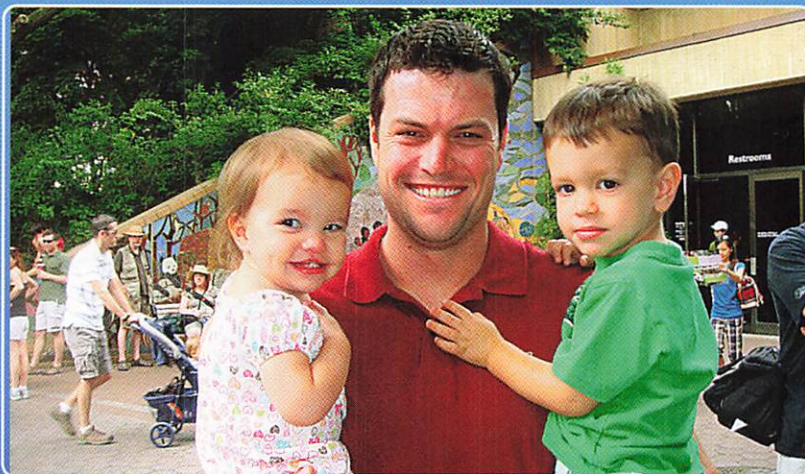
Pitching coach **Roger McDowell** and **Tim**

Songbird



MANDY COUPEL (above), the girlfriend of **Peter Moylan**, performed the national anthem prior to the Braves-Yankees game on June 25. "They called her that morning to see if she could sing," said Moylan. "She had six hours notice." Coupel, who has sung professionally, has also performed the anthem at minor league baseball games for the New Orleans Zephyrs and prior to "Fight Night" at Wild Bill's, a dance club and concert venue north of Atlanta.

FAMILY FUN



Matt Diaz with son Nathan (R) and daughter Anna visited the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., prior to the July 3 game.

A NUMBER OF BRAVES families made the trip to Washington, D.C., for the July 3-5 series. **Leslee Diaz (Matt)** flew to D.C. with son, **Nathan (2)**, and daughter, **Anna (1)**, and visited the National Zoo with Matt prior to the Friday evening game. On Saturday, the Diazes watched July 4th fireworks from the vantage point of the Pentagon, within walking distance of the team hotel. **Jeff Francoeur** was joined by his wife, **Catie**, and her parents and brothers. They visited

Arlington National Cemetery to view the changing of the guard ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. **Terry Pendleton's** wife, **Catherine**, and three children, **Stephanie**, **Terry Jr.**, and **Trinity** also made the trip, along with **Ronnie Snitker**, wife of third base coach **Brian Snitker**, **Carmen Smith**, wife of video coordinator **Rob Smith**, and their 18-month-old son, **Tyler**, **Ashley McCann (Brian)**, and **Debbie** and **David Porter**, wife and son of trainer **Jeff Porter**.

Hudson and **Jo-Jo Reyes** were among the players in the 2009 Prevent Child Abuse Georgia Celebrity Golf Classic hosted by **Kelly Johnson**. The tournament was held June 29 at White Columns Country Club in Milton, north of Atlanta...

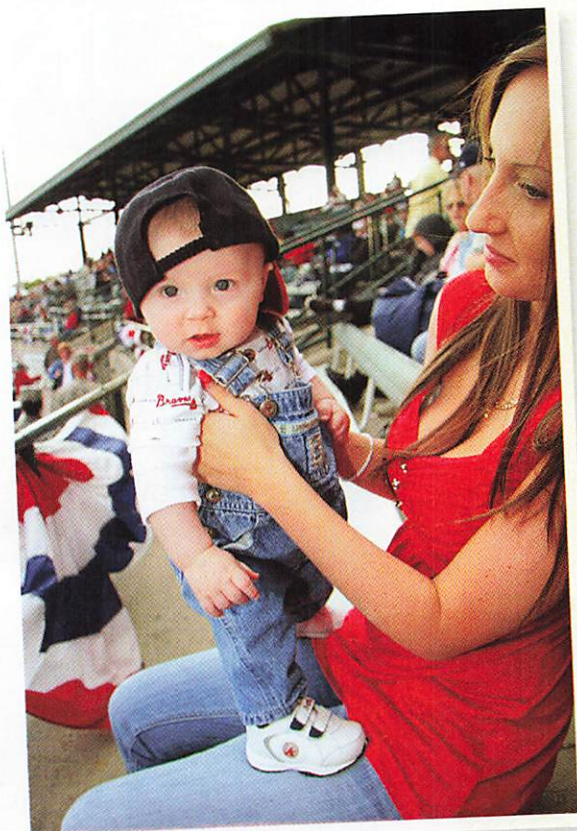
Save the date cards have gone out for the Rally Foundation's Third Annual Benefit Bash, Nov. 12 at the Retreat of Dunwoody. **Brian** and **Ashley McCann** are the honorary chairs of the event that raises money for Childhood Cancer Research. For more information, go to rallyfoundation.org or call (404) 847-1270. Another upcoming event is the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Georgia and Alabama's annual Wishes Gala. It will take place Nov. 14 at the Ritz-Carlton Buckhead. **Tim** and

Kim Hudson are the honorary chairs. For more information, contact **Ali Dunn** at (770) 916-9474, ext. 24 or go to gal.wish.org. The Hudsons will also host their First Hudson's Honky Tonk Benefit Weekend, Nov. 20-21, at "the Fred," the Fred Brown Jr. Amphitheater in Peachtree City. The weekend events will include an exclusive Team of Friends Dinner Party, Nov. 20, for event sponsors, and a concert the next night featuring country music superstar **Blake Shelton** and American Idol Season 2 finalist, **Josh Gracin**. Individual concert tickets will be available to the public. For more information, call (404) 584-0095. Proceeds from the weekend event benefit the Hudson Family Foundation.

TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.



COAST WATCH

We try to see several Braves games in Atlanta each year. We also go to watch the Rome Braves when they come to town to play the RiverDogs. Here's a picture of my four-month-old nephew, William Bailey, with his mom, Teresa Marie, at his second Rome Braves game at the RiverDogs' stadium in Charleston. Unfortunately, the Braves lost, but William had fun anyway. It's always fun to attend Braves games, whether it's in the minor leagues or the major. William can't wait to see the big boys play in Atlanta July 17.

TERRY FOWLER
Summerville, S.C.

PLAY BALL!

My parents, Bill and Nellie Cloer of Hudson, N.C., are great Atlanta Braves fans. Daddy turned 96 years old on April 14, and he hasn't lost a bit of his enthusiasm for the game. Mama is 90 years old and asks every day, "What time does the game come on?"

NADEEN SHREWSBERRY
Hickory, N.C.

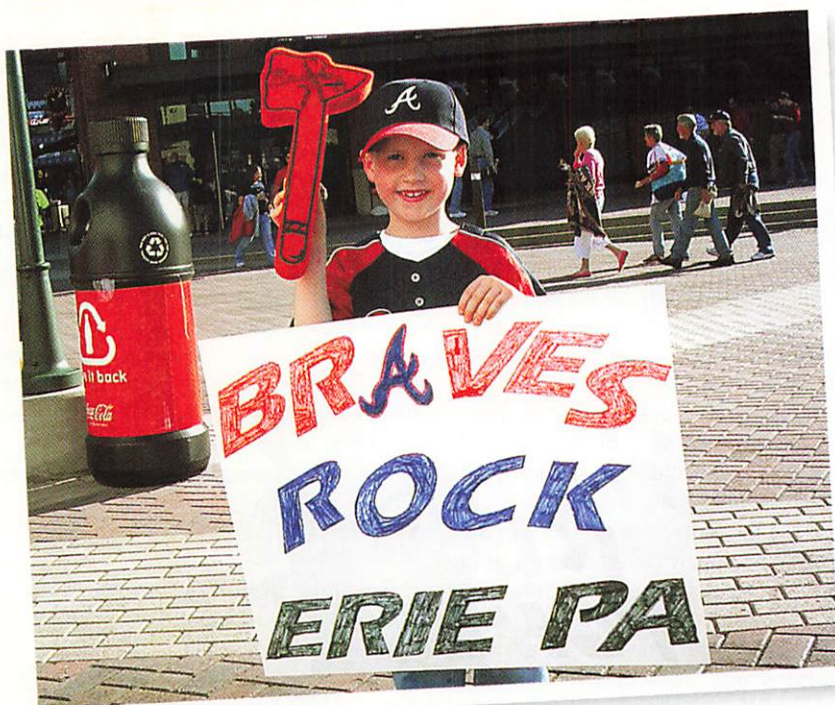


THE PENNSYLVANIANS ✉

My parents, John and Darla Matson, have been Atlanta Braves fans for over 25 years. They're from Erie, Pennsylvania, and have traveled to Atlanta for the past 11 years to see as many games as they can while they are there! I purchased a Foundation Legacy brick for them last Christmas and this year they were able to see it in place near the Hank Aaron statue.

You should have seen my dad's face when he caught a foul ball during the Braves game against the Diamond Backs! This was the third year that my son and I vacationed with them. Turner Field is a fantastic ballpark-my six-year-old can't wait to go back next year!

LORI MATSON
Pittsburgh, Pa.



90 YEARS YOUNG! ✉

What a great way to spend my 90th birthday - a trip to see the Braves play the St. Louis Cardinals! My son and family treated me to this occasion with Henry Aaron seats, reserved parking, Braves paraphernalia, pictures, and my name flashed across the board wishing me a happy birthday.

IRENE FOGO
Chattanooga, Tenn.

SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

WRITE TO US ✉

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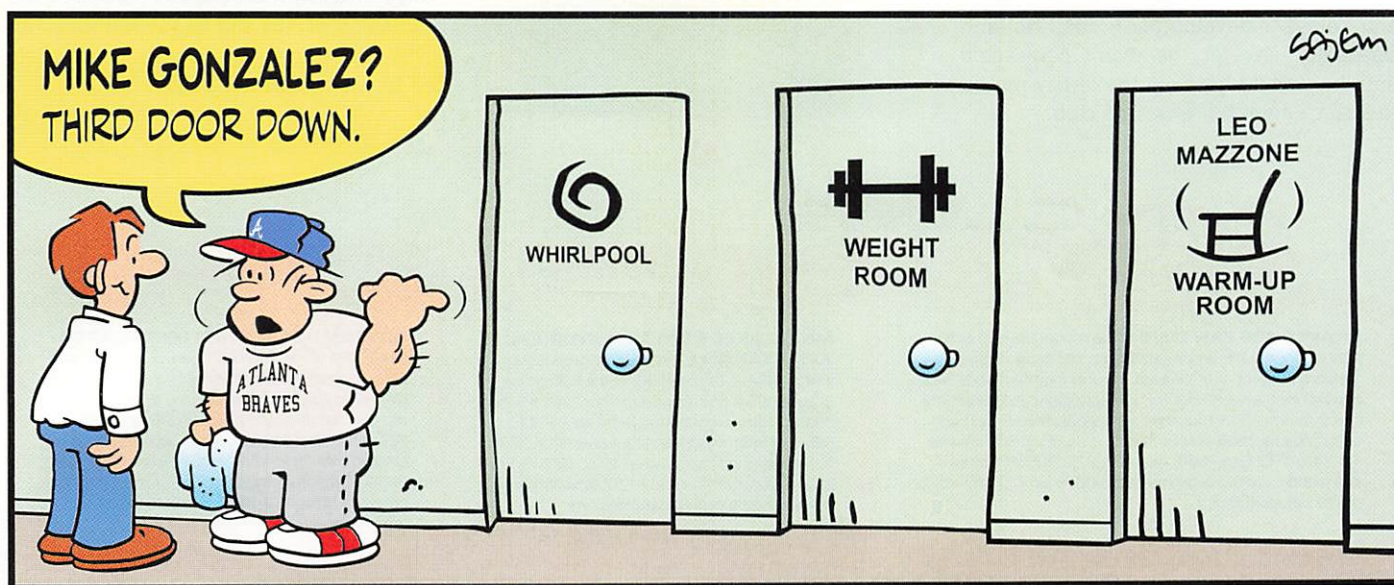
WRITE THE BRAVES ✉

Atlanta Braves
P.O. Box 4064
Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

If you request a response, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Never send anything of value that you want returned. This is no guarantee of a reply.

A ROCKIN' RELIEVER



XTRA INNINGS

FOLLOW THAT PASSPORT

WHEN THE BRAVES announced in February they were the first team in the major leagues to establish an academy in Europe with the opening of a facility in Tenerife, Spain, international scouting director Johnny Almaraz said the organization's sights were already set on signing an outfield prospect from Holland. That scenario became a reality when Ruben Rijkhof came to terms with Atlanta in April.

The 6-foot-2, 185-pound Rijkhof possesses an impressive combination of speed, arm strength and power at the plate. He played for Motovalle in the Canary Youth League this past winter and was named the league's top pitcher while leading it with a 1.93 ERA. The 17-year-old impressed Almaraz, as well as Jose Martinez, Nestor Perez Sr., and Nestor Perez Jr., at a tryout prior to his strong showing. The foursome believes Rijkhof has the ability to emerge as a five-tool centerfielder.

"He's a big kid with excellent arm strength and a lot of power potential," Almaraz said. "He stood out right away, and we're pleased to have the opportunity to bring him into the organization."

According to Almaraz, Rijkhof spent several days in extended spring training with the Braves to get acclimated with the organization. He's now in Australia, where he's one of four Braves participating in the summer league sponsored by Major League Baseball.

Born in Almere, Holland, Rijkhof started playing baseball as a 6-year-old in tee-ball with his mother, Wanda, as his coach, according to Gijs Selderijk, director of game and player development for Holland Baseball. However, he didn't play again until he was 12 because the family moved to Spain, where there was no club.

The family finally found a small club about an hour from his home, but it didn't have a coach, so his mother again took on that duty. Ruben went to baseball camps in Gijón, Spain, where he was named MVP, and in Amsterdam, Holland, where he won the home run award twice.

The Braves asked him to participate in a tryout in Tenerife, and within 20 minutes, they signed him, according to Selderijk, even though he'd played in just 40 games at that time.

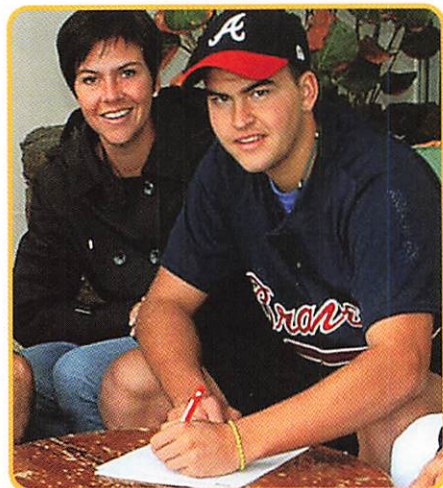
- BILL BALLEW

AND THEY'RE OFF!

Tim and Kim Hudson (below) gave their Hudson Family Foundation a rousing boost by raising over \$25,000 at the foundation's official Launch Party held at the W Atlanta Downtown/The Residences on June 28.

The party, held in the two-story penthouse with a breathtaking sunset view of downtown Atlanta, was attended by 150 guests who enjoyed a fabulous buffet from the hotel's restaurant, BLT Steak, and then competed in casino games, blackjack, roulette, and poker, Wii video games and Guitar Hero.

Among the guests were Buddy Carlyle



European prospect Ruben Rijkhof, signing his Braves contract with his mother, Wanda, is only 17 years old but is regarded as a potential "five-tool" centerfielder.

and wife, Jessica; Matt Diaz and wife, Leslee; Jeff Francoeur and wife, Catie; Kelly Johnson and wife Lauren; Casey Kotchman and fiancée Erin Krall; Brian McCann and wife Ashley; Greg Norton and wife Jaena; and Jo-Jo Reyes and wife, Jamie. Once the party was in full swing they were joined by Braves Jair Jurrjens, Martin Prado and Yunel Escobar.

Guests bid on silent auction items, including a team set of Braves autographed baseballs and jewelry donated by Uptown Girl boutique. Rossin, an internationally renowned portrait artist, unveiled a stunning painting of baseball icon Babe Ruth and two still life paintings - one of Hudson's baseball cap and a baseball, the other of Hudson's spikes. Rossin will donate a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the Ruth portrait to the Foundation. The Foundation also raffled off two trips to Las Vegas.

- PATTY RASMUSSEN

FAN CLUBS

BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB

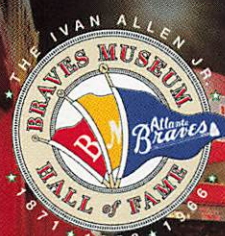
BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB is the official fan club of the Atlanta Braves. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting baseball at all levels. Annual membership is \$25 and includes a newsletter and the opportunity to participate in activities such as road trips, luncheons, the annual banquet, and charitable events. Send payment to: Braves 400 Fan Club, P.O. Box 7689, Atlanta, Ga. 30309. For more information, call the organization's hotline at (770) 416-4539 or visit braves400.org.

MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization that promotes the memory of the Milwaukee Braves (1953-65). Annual membership is \$25 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, 6700 N. Range Line Rd., Glendale, Wisc. 53209. For information, call (414) 347-1212 or visit milwaukeebraveshistoricalassociation.com.

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Braves in the city where the franchise began in 1871 and that it represented through 1952. Annual membership is \$15 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Boston Braves Historical Association, P.O. Box 5668, Marlboro, Mass. 01752. For more information, call (508) 485-1423 or visit Boston-braves.com.

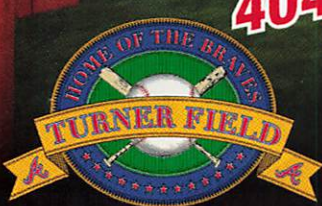


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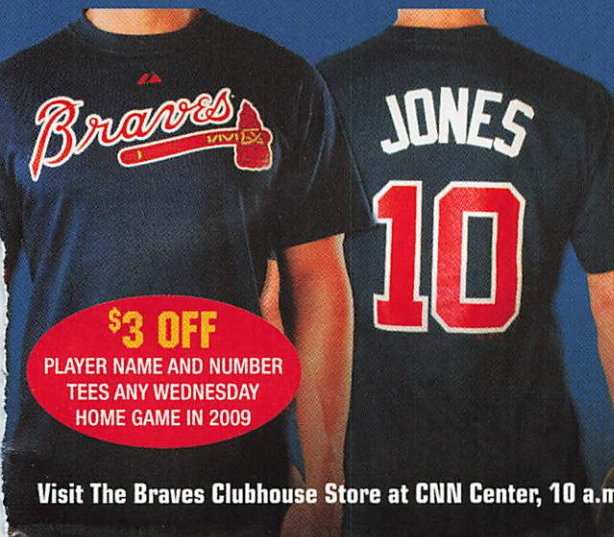


FANS COULD WIN A BRAVES REPLICA JERSEY

Each Wednesday home game of the 2009 season will provide fans an opportunity to win a replica jersey. Fans can purchase a specially-priced name and number t-shirt of select Braves players at the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center.

If the player whose t-shirt was purchased hits a walk-off home run that same day, the fan will receive a replica jersey.

This promotion will take place during Wednesday home Braves games starting April 15th for the 2009 Season. Certain restrictions may apply. Subject to official rules. For complete rules and an entire selection of Braves player t-shirts, visit the Braves Clubhouse Store.



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HOME GAME IN 2009

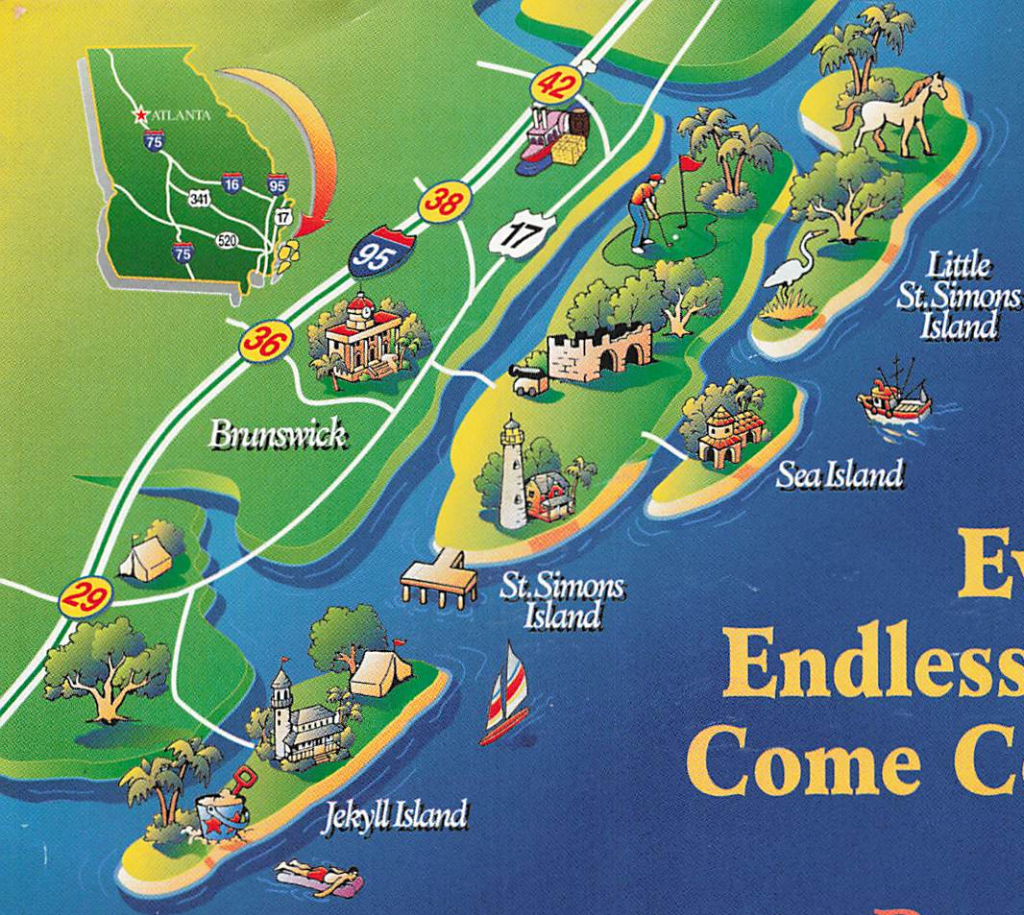


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